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CHRISTIAN AND DEIST.

CHRISTIAN AND DEIST,

AND

THE PROPHETS.

BEING

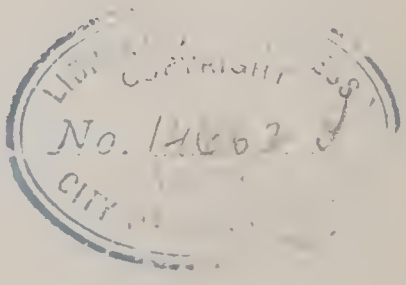
A BUSINESS MAN'S VIEWS

UPON

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL MATTERS.

17
1723

By D. V. A.



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PREFACE.

This little work is written to supply, in a measure, a demand from those seeking after truth as to the *authority* of the Christian and Jewish Scriptures. The writer, having been taught to believe that the Bible was the Revealed Word of the Creator, but with a deep-rooted aversion, even in childhood, to the *attributes* therein ascribed to this Being, was constantly much exercised in mind, through a long period of business activity affording little time for the scrutiny of such matters, as to the truth of this so-called revelation.

At length, realizing a lively conviction of the importance of the subject, both to himself and to those whom it was his duty to instruct, he commenced to search, and also to inquire of those who had made it the study of their

lives, as to the authority of the Book which purported to set forth such wonderful revelation. He first compared the statements of the four Evangelists, so-called, regarding the birth, life, wonderful career and teachings of Jesus, and, finding such astonishing variance here, he besought a noted Christian clergyman to assist him in disentangling this network of incongruities and contradictions. After some conversation upon the subject, he was told that, as he was a good business man, he had better confine himself to secular matters, and leave theology alone. He also obtained no satisfaction from this worthy "divine" as to the authority of this Book, who its real authors were, or whether it had been handed down to us through such a channel as to warrant confidence in its genuineness: he was told that the Book was authority enough within itself, and needed no corroboration. All this aroused him to a more ardent determination to get at the core of the matter, if possible, and what is given in the pages which follow is the result of this inquiry, briefly stated.

The work is intended as a stepping-stone for those who, as did the author himself, seek truth under many disadvantages. There is necessarily some repetition of what has heretofore been said, but the writer has felt an assurance that this, gathered from several sources, might be compiled and so systematized, bearing directly upon the subject in hand, as to warrant repeating, even to those who have met with the same before. The correctness of his impression, and how well he may have accomplished this purpose, must be left for others to judge. There are millions, however, who, like the author when he began his inquiry, have been debarred, through the prejudice of education and surrounding influences, from perusing critical works upon this subject, to whom these inquiries, suggestions and quotations will be new.

As looking at both sides of a question is the only true way to form any satisfactory or intelligent opinion of it, it is hoped that those who scan this little book will not be satisfied to rest here, but will continue the investigation

among those authors who have nobly toiled to point out error and deception, and direct mankind to truth. To strengthen the author's view of his subject, he desires to say that there is a vast quantity of valuable information contained in the works alluded to which has not been introduced here, as the writer has hesitated about repeating too much, however valuable it might be to his argument.

But, above all, study the Book itself. It is the internal evidence which, when properly examined and compared, condemns it more than aught else. To use its own language, out of its own mouth it is condemned. So-called *divine revelation*, repugnant to the nobler instincts of the human heart, so utterly at variance in its statements as to be irreconcilable with the cause of truth, can be of little value to mankind.

In the interest of truth, and with a full assurance that I am contributing that which may be of benefit to my fellow-beings, I commit this little work to their kind consideration.

THE AUTHOR.

CHRISTIAN AND DEIST.

I.

Christian: My friend, is it true, as I am told, that one so noble-hearted as you is not a Christian, and that you actually deny the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures?

Deist: Thanks for the complimentary manner in which it has pleased you to speak of me, and in reply to your question I would say, I know of no external proof, and find nothing in the Scriptures themselves, sufficient to convince me of their Divine inspiration, unless it be held that all high moral conceptions, whether from a Confucius, a Socrates, a Plato, a Jesus, or a Dickens, are divinely inspired,

and in which case from whence arise evil conceptions?

CHRISTIAN: You believe in the existence of a God, do you not?

DEIST: I believe in a Power that guides and rules the Universe, call you this Power God, or whatever name you choose.

CHRISTIAN: Where do you get the evidence of this Power. if not from the Holy Scriptures?

DEIST: From the Heavens above our heads, in all their immensity and grandeur, and in the marvellousness and harmony of their movements; from the Earth beneath our feet, and all that exists thereon.

CHRISTIAN: And might not this Power, or, as I prefer to call the Power, God, reveal himself in some other manner? In other words, might he not have inspired his chosen prophets to have made known to his creatures, as we claim he has, his purposes, his laws and commands?

DEIST: Not impossible, perhaps; but I apprehend, had he chosen this course, such

would have been made known to man in a manner so consistent, comprehensive and lucid, that the weakest of his creatures could not have misunderstood; in short, in a manner worthy of himself.

CHRISTIAN: Am I, then, to understand that you look upon the Bible as an inconsistent book, and hold that God's purposes and commands are not therein comprehensively and clearly stated?

DEIST: You are.

CHRISTIAN: I am amazed at your serious charge, and, though I have been a constant reader of the Scriptures for forty years, I have been unable to detect the inconsistencies to which you refer.

DEIST: This comes from reading, as it were, with your eyes shut; reading by the light of faith, as you are pleased to term it; in other words, with a fixed conviction that it was divine revelation you were perusing, which you were not permitted to question. And this, again, arises from your education and surroundings; the influence of parents and teach-

ers, who have themselves been the subjects of like impressions.

The same lack of individuality of thought would have made you a Buddhist or Mussulman in belief, had those influences surrounded you.

The spirit of Christianity has been that of utter intolerance from its infancy, not willing to endure or listen to any other form of religion, and still less tolerant of any investigation or criticism of its fundamental tenets. In its interest, and to propagate its dogmas, the dungeon, the rack and the stake have been in requisition, and war has been almost incessant, clear down to our day.

The blood that has flowed, and the lives and treasure sacrificed in this interest, have been appalling. Until quite a recent period, nowhere within the precincts of Christendom have mankind been allowed to publish views expressing a doubt of the divine revelation or the Scriptures without danger of their lives or of a prison. And when at last these shackles were removed, those who were honest and

bold enough to speak out their convictions were doomed to have their names held up to public execration, and to a great extent this remains so even to this day.

Such is the gratitude of mankind toward those who toil to point out to them an error, or a delusion under which they have been laboring. To-day, therefore, the works of M. de Voltaire, Thomas Paine, and others, who have so clearly pointed out the many incongruities—in fact, downright contradictions—contained in the Bible, remain under the ban of Christian intolerance. Christian parents dare not intrust them to their children.

And why is this? Is truth to be thus guarded? Does the Bible, the Word of God, as you are pleased to call it, stand upon a foundation that is likely to be undermined by puny man? If so, I say, let it fall. I would put such works as are here spoken of into the hands of all who have reached the age of discretion, wherever the Bible is read. They would open the eyes which a blind education, intolerance and superstition have closed, and

give mankind the benefit of reading the Bible at least with their eyes open. If, then, by reading, comparing and studying as a book which professes so much should be studied, it stands the test to their minds of divine revelation, so be it.

If I have spoken somewhat energetically upon this subject, I beg you will pardon me, for, I must confess, the apparent apathy shown by Christians in taking for granted the Bible as divine revelation, with little or no attempt to search and compare, that they may discover whether the work seems to be one worthy an Omnipotent and Omniscient Being, somewhat annoys me. But let me now ask if, as in your opinion, the divine requirements are so clearly imparted in the Scriptures, how is it that there is such a multitude of sects all differing, wrangling and bickering, and yet all drawing the evidence to sustain their many differences from this same Bible? The riddle of the Trinity, and whether Jesus of Nazareth was man or God, has divided the Church almost from its infancy

down to the present day, costing many lives and much bad blood, and yet it is no nearer a solution now than ever.

CHRISTIAN: I am aware that there are many differences among Christians in reference to the Scriptures, but then this is not the fault of the book, but owing to the inability of mankind to form a proper understanding of it.

DEIST: Ah yes! and so you cannot grant the revelation obscure, but claim that men's heads are thick; and over that you and I will not quarrel; but I must still insist that the fault in this case lies not so much with mankind as in the book: an allwise Creator is not likely to speak to his creatures in riddles.

CHRISTIAN: I have asked if you believe in a God: now permit me to ask if you believe in the history of the Creation as given by Moses?

DEIST: Given by Moses; by what authority do you declare this?

CHRISTIAN: By the authority of the Bible itself; you certainly do not question Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch?

DEIST: Most certainly I do; and let me here

say, you do well to confine your authority to the Bible alone, as the history of Egypt, where he is said to have been reared, and performed such astounding miracles, as all other history, is as silent as the grave concerning all these.

It is true Manetho and Cheremon speak of one Moses, but it can hardly be him of whom the Bible has such a wonderful record, for the account of their Moses is anything but flattering or wonderful.

And now as to his authorship of the books in the Bible ascribed to him, I have several questions to ask, which, though I do not claim as new or original, have never yet been answered, therefore remain as pertinent as when at first presented. If I am not presuming too much upon your patience, I will now ask for an answer once more.

CHRISTIAN: Go on.

II.

DEIST: *First.* How will you account for the fact of there being no mention made of the Pentateuch in Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Psalms, or

in fact in any canonical book of the Jews written previous to the Babylonian Captivity?

Second. Would the Jewish prophets, writing before the time of the Babylonian Captivity, have directly opposed the laws of Moses in so many instances, had they known of any such laws?

Third. If Moses wrote both Leviticus and Deuteronomy, how will you account for the fact that in one he forbids a woman to marry her brother, and in the other commands it?

Fourth. How will you account for the universal silence of all the following books in the Old Testament, for more than a thousand years, upon the extraordinary things spoken of in Genesis, such as the creation of the world in six days; the garden of Eden; the story of Eve and the serpent; the fall of man; together with Noah's flood, and the tower of Babel?

Fifth. You are asked how it is that the names of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses and Aaron, so prevalent among the Jews now and since the Babylonian Captivity, were not adopted by them previous to that time?

Sixth. If Adam and Eve were really the first parents of mankind, how is it that nations undeniably anterior to the Jews should have never heard their names, or the names of Cain, Abel, Noah and Methuselah, until the Hebrew Bible was given to the Greeks, through the translation under Ptolemy, two hundred and fifty years before the time of Jesus of Nazareth? Also, how is it that the Deluge was not known to the Greeks, Latins, Phœnicians, Egyptians, or Brahmins, or that nothing was known by other nations of the famous tower of Babel until this time?

Seventh. How is it that the Pentateuch speaks of Abraham having paid in *silver coin* for a cave in which to bury his wife, or the King of Gerar having given Sarah a thousand pieces of silver, when, at the time ascribed to Abraham, and also to Moses, there was no such thing as *silver coin* in existence?

Eighth. How was it that Solomon, when he built his temple, should have ornamented it with so many statues, contrary to the express commands of Moses, had he known any-

thing of what Moses had said upon the subject?

Ninth. Genesis, chapter xxxvi, verse 31, reads as follows: "And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom before there reigned any king over the children of Israel."

The phraseology of this verse is such that it is undeniable that it must have been written after kings had reigned over Israel; and as Saul was the first, it certainly must have been written after his time, or many centuries subsequent to Moses.

Tenth. Again, the Pentateuch speaks of the cities of Jair and the country of Dan, when it is an undeniable fact that those cities and that country did not take such names until centuries after the time of Moses.

Eleventh. You are asked, if Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, why he should be continually speaking of himself in the third person, as, "The Lord said unto Moses," etc.? and is it not rather anomalous for a man to write an account of his own death and burial?

Twelfth. Again, I would ask, is it prob-

able that Moses, or any other human being, could have been so stupid as to have recorded in a book such a silly falsehood as that of his having taken sixty great towns fortified by high walls, besides an immense number of open cities in a sterile province of Arabia Petrea, where nothing of the kind ever existed? or is it possible that any human being could make such a consummate ass of himself as to put upon record the cruelties, the horrid butcheries, the assassinations and abominations, and, above all, the absurd bundle of stuff called miracles, scattered all through this book of the Pentateuch, in which he himself was the prime mover and principal actor? Is it not far more probable that, in an age long posterior, all these fancied absurdities took their rise in the imagination of some crafty Rabbi, for the purpose of controlling an ignorant, stupid and superstitious people?

Thirteenth. And, finally, you are particularly asked how it is that the Oriental fables, long anterior to the Old Testament, attribute to Bacchus so much that the Jews claim for

Moses? For instance, they relate how "he was picked up in a box that floated on the water, and took his name, *Mises*, in signification of his having been saved from the waters; and *Bimater*, from his having had two mothers—that is, one by nature, and another who adopted him. He had a rod, with which he performed miracles, and which he could change into a serpent at pleasure. He passed the Red Sea dry-shod, with a multitude of men, women and children. He divided the waters of the rivers Orontes and Hydaspus by the touch of his rod, and passed through them dry-shod. By the same mighty wand he drew water from the rock, and wherever he marched the land flowed with wine, milk and honey. He was called the law-giver, and engraved his laws on two tables of marble."

If we have not the *original* Moses here, where are we to find him? We see, also, that the Jews came naturally by their trading proclivities, since we here find their ancestors, in the far-off past, stealing the fables of other na-

tions and passing them off for revealed religion.

CHRISTIAN: I confess myself staggered by these questions, and unable to answer them, but I have no doubt the Rev. Mr. ——— would be able to explain them in a perfectly satisfactory manner, and without any difficulty.

III.

DEIST: Here it is, again; you, like the rest of your faith, rather than investigate, study and think for yourselves on matters of the most transcendent importance, content yourselves with letting others think for you, who ride over such matters either by a general denial, or tell you that where reason leads to doubt you must stultify the intellect and proceed under *faith;* but when your minister is able to give satisfactory answers to these questions I shall be happy to hear them. And now, in reference to your question as to whether I believe in the history of the Creation as given in Genesis: I think that has been conclusively answered in showing that Moses, the Great Prophet, as you call him,

could not have been the author thereof; therefore it stands upon no authority whatever. It seems almost unnecessary to pursue the argument, but as the entire corner-stone of the Christian religion rests here, and as there are other strong grounds for denying the reality of the Mosaic account of the Creation, I will present them here.

First, science, which is worth a dozen books of unknown authorship, refutes it. Next, the most learned Jews do not to-day, and never did, regard it as aught but allegory or fable. Maimonides, the highest of Jewish authority, distinctly affirms this. He has been quoted often, but what he has to say is so pertinent and definite upon the subject, that I shall not hesitate to quote him here once more. "We ought," he says, "not to understand, or take according to the letter, that which is written in the Book of the Creation, nor to have the same ideas of it with common men: otherwise, our ancient sages would not have recommended with so much care to conceal the sense of it, and not to raise the alle-

gorical veil which envelopes the truth it contains. The book of Genesis, taken according to the letter, gives the most absurd and the most extravagant ideas of the Divinity. Whoever shall find out the sense of it ought to restrain himself from divulging it. It is a maxim which all our sages repeat, and, above all, with respect to the work of six days. It may happen that some one, with the aid he may borrow from others, may hit upon the meaning of it. In that case, he ought to impose silence upon himself: or, if he speak of it, he ought to speak obscurely, and in an enigmatical manner, as I do myself, leaving the rest to be found out by those who can understand." And so we see that though he would be very mysterious, he makes an admission here that is not only fatal to his religion, but to the Christian religion, also. Augustine, also, in his *City of God*, acknowledges the account of Eve and the serpent as allegorical; and Origen, the most learned and noted of all the early Christian writers, says: "What man of good sense can

ever persuade himself that there was a first, a second, and a third day, and that each of these days had a night, when there was yet neither sun, moon nor stars? What man can be stupid enough to believe that God, acting the part of a gardener, had planted a garden in the East; that the tree of life was a real tree, and that its fruit had the virtue of making those who ate of it live forever?" Now, why do Christians at the present day so strenuously maintain the reality of this silly fable? I will tell you why: They have built a structure upon this foundation, which, if removed, brings the whole fabric down about their ears. Through the fabulous Adam all mankind were lost; and, according to their dogma, through Jesus of Nazareth, whom they have exalted into a God, all *may be* saved, but only a small fraction are going to be.

Origen could afford to proclaim this history of the Creation a fable, for he did not believe in Jesus as God; but orthodox Christians now cannot afford to acknowledge it, and so this silly fable stands up before the

most enlightened people of our globe to-day, and is being taught to our children, as a true account of the origin of this great universe.

Oh, my God, how much longer must these shackles of superstition fetter an enlightened to a barbarous age?

CHRISTIAN: The fact, if fact it be, that learned Hebrews regard the history of the Creation, as given in Genesis, as allegorical, is new to me, and I must acknowledge myself again astounded.

DEIST: It is not strange that this is new to you, as it no doubt is to most professed Christians, for, as I have before remarked, the policy of the Church has ever been to suppress any and all truth that might tend to weaken the dogmas upon which it is founded.

IV.

CHRISTIAN: But if granted that the history of the Creation is fabulous, that the author or authors of the Pentateuch are unknown, and that it was written at a much later date than that ascribed to Moses, we then have

left the prophets of the Old Testament with their clear predictions of the coming of Jesus fulfilled.

DEIST: And here you labor under as great an error as before. The prophecies relating to the coming of Jesus, of which you speak, as has already been conclusively shown, have not the remotest reference to him. I care not, therefore, to enter into any further explanation of them here; but you are certainly intelligent enough to read and compare for yourself, which I advise you and every other Christian to do, confident that you will find as much to astonish by such an investigation as from the evidence herein produced upon the authority of the Pentateuch and the history of the Creation.

And while you are perusing the Old Testament I would call your attention to the lives and characters of those who make up its history, that you may discover what sort of beings, according to its own record, the Great Ruler of the Universe has chosen and inspired, as you claim, to make known to man-

kind his purposes, his laws and commands. If I mistake not, you will find they are composed, with hardly an exception, of murderers, assassins, adulterers, liars, thieves and vagabonds, unequaled by anything you have ever met with in history before.

CHRISTIAN: Indeed you are very severe on these old patriarchs and prophets, but you have at least awakened my interest, and I shall hereafter study the Old Testament a little closer than heretofore.

But, laying aside the Old Testament, suppose we now take up the New, and I would like to hear your views without much attempt on my part for argument, as I find you are much more familiar with these matters than I am. You deny the *divinity* of Jesus, which the New Testament conclusively establishes, if I comprehend its meaning.

V.

DEIST: Say not that I am, but rather the Bible itself is, severe on its old patriarchs and prophets, as I only call your attention spe-

cially to what *it* charges. Let me here say that I should be pleased to listen, either at this or at any future time, to all argument you may be able to bring forth in support of your faith. I admit that the New Testament attempts to establish the divinity of Jesus, but here again, as in the Old, the *authority* becomes the matter of first importance, and surely it were impotent in mankind to rest their faith in matters of such stupendous importance except upon authority that was undoubted. This is a matter upon which much has been said, and books might still be written upon the subject, but I must content myself with but a cursory glance here.

Jesus wrote nothing himself, and all that is known of what he said or did comes down to us through the books of the four Evangelists—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It is a disputed question, and one that certainly admits of the gravest doubts, as to whether any of these Gospels were written by those whose names they bear; but that I shall not discuss here, but shall treat the subject upon

the hypothesis that the four Evangelists did leave behind them documents treating of the life and sayings of Jesus. The question which first arises, then, is, Have these documents been handed down to us in their *original* state, or have they been "doctored" at the convenience of the priests for the purpose of establishing their desired dogmas? In proof of the latter hypothesis, which I believe to be the correct one, I will here bring forward what seems to my mind very strong evidence.

In the first place, we must bear in mind that there are no manuscripts of these Gospels in existence bearing an earlier date than the sixth century; that all originals have been destroyed, or are at least lost. Now, when we consider that all these original manuscripts were kept closely in the hands of the priests (the laity having little use for them, in fact, as but few of them could read), we may readily discover the *opportunity* they had for supplementing or pruning them to their liking. As to whether this may have been done or not, we will let others, and the Testament

itself, speak. In the year A.D. 506 the Emperor Anastasius proclaimed as follows: "The illustrious Messala being consul, by the command of the Emperor Anastasius, the Holy Gospels, as having been written by idiot Evangelists, are censured and corrected. Victor, Bishop of Tunis in Africa."—*Cave's Historia Literaria*, vol. i, p. 415.

Faustus, a Manichean Bishop, who wrote in the fourth century, says: "It is an understood fact that the New Testament was not written by Christ himself, nor by his apostles, but a long while after their time, by some unknown persons, who, lest they should not be credited when they wrote of affairs they were little acquainted with, affixed to their works the names of the apostles, or of such as were supposed to have been their companions, and then said they were written according to them.

"For many things have been inserted by your ancestors in the speeches of our Lord, which, though put forth under his name, agree not with his faith; especially since, as already

it has often been proved by us, that these things were not written by Christ nor his apostles, but a long while after their assumption by I know not what sort of half Jews, not even agreeing with themselves, who made up their tales out of reports and opinions merely, and yet fathering the whole upon the names of the apostles, they mendaciously pretended that they had written their lies and conceits according to them."—*Faustus*, lib. ii and lib. xxxiii.

In speaking of the four Gospels, Marsh's *Michailes*, vol. ii, p. 160, says: "No manuscript of these writings now in existence is prior to the sixth century, and various readings which, as appears from the quotations of the Fathers, were in the text of the Greek Testament are to be found in none of the manuscripts which are at present remaining."

The same author, vol. ii, p. 496, says: "In our common editions of the Greek Testament are many readings which exist not in a single manuscript, but are founded on mere conjecture."

The *Unitarian New Version*, p. 121, says: "It is notorious that the orthodox charge the heretics with corrupting the text, and that the heretics recriminate upon the orthodox."

Scaliger says: "They put into their Scriptures whatever they thought would serve their purpose."

Reeves' Preliminary Discourse to the Commentary of Vincentius' Lirinensis, p. 190, says: "Notwithstanding those twelve known infallible and faithful judges of controversy, the twelve apostles, there were as many and as damnable heresies crept in even in the Apostolic age as in any other age, perhaps, during the same space of time."

Michailes, vol. ii, p. 119, says: "The confusion unavoidable in these versions [the ancient Latin, from which all our European versions are derived] had arisen to such a height that St. Jerome, in his preface to the Gospels, complains that no one copy resembles another."

Evanson, in his *Dissonance of the Four Gospels*, says that, "though they were to be received as the composition of Jesus' contempo-

raries, and even eye-witnesses of the scenes and actions they describe, these compositions do nevertheless betray so great a degree of ignorance of the geography, statistics and circumstances of Judea at the time supposed as to put beyond all question that the writers were neither witnesses nor contemporaries, neither Jews, nor at any time the inhabitants of Judea."

Mosheim, vol. i, p. 198, says "it was an almost universally adopted maxim that it was an act of virtue to deceive and lie, when by such means the interests of the Church might be promoted."

Semler tells us that "the Christian doctors never brought their sacred books before the common people, although people in general have been wont to think otherwise; during the first ages they were in the hands of the clergy only."

Mosheim, vol. ii, p. 120, says "the authors who have treated of the ignorance and sanctity of the primitive Christians have fallen into the error of supposing them to have been unspot-

ted models of purity and virtue, and a gross error indeed it is, as the strongest testimonies too evidently prove."

Bishop Fell's *Syntagma*, p. 34, says: "Such was the license of inventing, so headlong the readiness of believing, in the first ages, that the credibility of transactions derived from thence must have been hugely doubtful; nor has the world only, but the church of God, also, has reason to complain of its mystical times."

Archbishop Wake's *Life of the Apostle Barnabas*, p. 73, says: "They have but little knowledge of the Jewish nation and of the primitive Christians who obstinately refuse to believe that such sort of notions could not proceed from thence; for, on the contrary, it was their very character to turn the whole Scriptures into allegory."

Beausobre's Histoire de Manichee, tom. ii, p. 568, says: "We see in the history which I have related a sort of hypocrisy that has been, perhaps, but too common at all times: that churchmen not only do not say what they think, but they do say the direct contrary of what

they think. Philosophers in their cabinets, out of them they are content with fables, though they well know that they are fables. Nay, more, they damn honest men to the executioner for having uttered what they know themselves to be true."

And now hear what Bishop Marsh has to say of the great Origen as a *trimmer:* "It is a certain fact," he says, "that several passages in our common printed text are nothing more than alterations made by Origen, whose authority was so great in the Christian Church that emendations which he proposed, though, as he himself acknowledged, they were supported by the evidence of no manuscripts, were very generally received."

But it would seem from his own admission that even Origen found the task of rendering consistent these Gospels too herculean for his great genius. Hear, now, what he says as to the discrepancies in them: "One of two only is possible: either these things are true in a spiritual sense only, or, as long as these discrepancies are not satisfactorily explained

away, we cannot believe in the Gospels being dictated by the Holy Ghost, and redacted under the influence of inspiration." What more does the infidel say than what is said here by the most learned and honest Father of the Church? Here, in the beginning of the third century, is the frank confession of the most eminent divine that had flourished since the time of Jesus. His good sense forced the conclusion that a collection of books so discordant and inconsistent as those of the New Testament could not be accepted as divine revelation, and he was honest enough to acknowledge it. He believed in Jesus, however, as one of the noblest of teachers, and his life a glorious example for mankind. Desiring, therefore, to advance his cause, he did not hesitate to use the pruning-knife to render consistent, so far as it was in his power, this jumble of incongruities.

These few selections are taken from scores that might be produced, nearly or quite as strong; and, let it be remembered, they are not

from the enemies of Christianity, but mostly from the highest authorities of the Christian Church.

VI.

And now let me quote you a few short extracts from the writings of the "Fathers of the Church," under whose guardianship the Gospels were held down through the first four centuries, that you may draw your own conclusions as to whether these "Fathers" were such as would have been likely to have hesitated about modeling the Gospels to accord with their own views, or suit their own purposes. St. Hermas, Bishop of Philipolis, A.D. about 100, says: "I never spake a true word in my life, but always lived in dissimulation and affirmed a lie for truth to all men, and no man contradicted me, but all gave credit to my word." Enough for one Father.

Papias, Bishop of Hieropolis, A.D. about 115, says: "The Lord taught and said that the days shall come in which vines shall spring up, each having ten thousand branches, and in each branch shall be ten thousand arms, and

on each arm of a branch ten thousand tendrils, and on each tendril ten thousand bunches, and on each bunch ten thousand grapes, and each grape on being pressed shall yield five and twenty gallons of wine; and when one of the saints shall take hold of one of these branches, another shall cry out, I am a better bunch, take me and bless the Lord by me." Glorious faith!

Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, A.D. about 180, says: "There ought to be but four Gospels, because there are but four quarters of the world, and four cardinal points, and Ezekiel saw but four animals." He says, also, that "Rahab, the prostitute of Jericho, in concealing the spies of the people of God, concealed the Father, Son and Holy Ghost." Sublime.

St. Clemens, of Alexandria, tells us that Moses killed a king of Egypt on the spot by sounding the name of Jehovah in his ear, after which he brought him to life again by pronouncing the same word." Innocents abroad.

St. Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, says of those who dare to go contrary to the

Bishop's opinion, that they are "renegades, apostates, malignants, parricides, anti-Christs, blasphemers, the devil's priests, villainous and perfidious, without hope; had no right to the promises, could not be saved, were no more Christians than the devil, could not go to heaven, the hottest part of hell their portion, their preaching poisonous, their baptism pestiferous, their persons accursed," etc. Draws it mild.

And Tertullian, a priest of Carthage, A.D. about 200, was quite as meek; hear him upon the sin of attending theaters: "You are fond of spectacles," he says, "expect the greatest of all spectacles, the last and eternal judgment of the universe. How shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult, when I behold so many proud monarchs and fancied gods groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness; so many magistrates who persecuted the name of the Lord, liquefying in fiercer fires than they ever kindled against the Christians; so many celebrated poets trem-

bling before the tribunal, not of Minos, but of Christ!"

And even the learned Origen, who is acknowledged by Marsh as having emended the text, was superstitious enough to make use of the following language: "If, when evoking God, or swearing by him, you call him the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you will by these words do things the nature and force of which are such that the evil spirits submit to those who pronounce them; but if you call him by any other name, as God of the roaring sea, etc., no effect will be produced. What is called magic is not a vain and chimerical art, as the Stoics and Epicureans pretend." And much more to the same purpose.

And now let us hear what St. Cyprian, of Carthage, A.D. about 250, has to say of the priests: "Every priest," says he, "seeks for wealth and honor with insatiable avidity; knavery is general; profane swearing and perjury abound; animosities divide Christians asunder; bishops abandon their pulpits to attend the ex-

change, and obtain opulence by merchandize: in short, we please ourselves alone, and excite the disgust of all the rest of the world." Priests have improved.

And now, Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, A.D. about 325: he says, "whenever he found his understanding to meditate on the *divinity* of the Logos, his toilsome and unavailing efforts recoiled on themselves; that the more he thought, the less he comprehended," etc. Who can doubt that he spoke the truth? Again he says, "Should we understand sacred writ according to the letter, we should fall into the most enormous blasphemies." Wherein his favorite doctrine of three in one was concerned I should be a little suspicious of this bishop.

And now let us see what St. Jerome has to say of the clergy in his day, A.D. about 400. In a letter to Eusebius he says: "When you see them accost the rich widows whom they meet with a soft and sanctified air, you would think that their hands were only extended to give them their blessing; but it is, on the contrary, to receive the price of their hypocrisy."

Again he says: "Origen, Methodius, Eusebius and Appollinaris have written a million of arguments against Celsus and Porphyry; consider with what artifice and what problematic subtlety they combat the spirit of the devil. They do not say what they think, but what it is expedient to say."

And now for the frank confession of St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo-Regius, in Africa, about A.D. 400, who says, in speaking of the doctrine of the Trinity: "When it is asked, What are the *three?* the language of man fails, and terms are wanting to express them. Three persons have, however, been said, not for the purpose of expressing anything, but in order to say something and not remain mute." Candid, surely!

And last, but not least, let us hear from the crafty Church historian, Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea, A.D. 315. He confesses, in his Church History, that he "has related whatever might redound to the glory, and that he has suppressed all that could tend to the disgrace, of religion." A historian who will make such

a confession, and who, not without strong presumptive evidence, is accused of having inserted in the writings of Josephus the clause in relation to Jesus, and who has also written such a panegyric of the bloodthirsty Constantine, we need not doubt, would tamper with the Gospels or anything else to accomplish his purposes.

It was under the control of such bishops and priests as we have quoted from that the original documents of the Evangelists—or whoever wrote them, and of which there is no trustworthy authority—were handed down for two or three centuries, and with how much addition and subtraction, how many compilations and alterations, we may judge by the evidence of the Gospels themselves. Finally, out of a collection of fifty or more of the same sort, these four Gospels were selected, voted on by bishops and priests, received the required majority of votes, and were solemnly pronounced *divine revelation.* It only remained for the power of the wretched Constantine, and the edicts, both by himself and Theodosius, *that all*

writings adverse to the Christian religion should be committed to the flames, to complete the despotism, and launch upon the world a religion as tyrannical as any the world has ever produced; and so it still remains.

VII.

I will now quote from the Gospels themselves three verses bearing upon the same subject. Mark, chap. xvi, verses 16, 17, 18, read as follows:

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

"And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

"They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

These are boldly given as the words of Jesus. Now, what man of ordinary capacity can say that he believes Jesus ever uttered any such

words, or words or sentiments similar to these? or, granting that he did utter them, can doubt that he was, at the time, anything but a madman? According to this definition of Christianity, there is not to-day, nor ever has been since the time of Jesus, a Christian. And if Jesus did not say this, and it is an interpolation, then how can you deny that there are not a thousand such interpolations in the New Testament?

Again, Matthew, chap. xxi, verses 21–22, Jesus, in speaking to his disciples, says:

"...If ye have faith, and doubt not,...if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done.

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

It is not impossible that Jesus said this to his disciples; if he did, however, it seems to me that it would have added much to their faith had he given them an illustration by picking up some of their mountains and throwing them overboard. Such a miracle, performed in a

province of the Roman Empire, might possibly have found its way into profane history, which, unfortunately for their credibility, none of the miracles of Jesus have. We must draw the inference, I suppose, that none of the disciples had faith enough to try their hand on a mountain, as we have never heard of any having been removed in that way. The Greeks have a saying, "Miracles for fools": would to God none but fools believed in them!

Now, if these paragraphs, or any of them, have been boldly inserted in the text, God only knows how many more have been, and we are placed right in a position where we cannot, with undoubted confidence, put our finger on a single passage in the Testament and say such were the words or teachings of Jesus.

I am now ready to answer your question as to the *divinity* of Jesus; but I am doing all the talking, and would now like to hear from you.

CHRISTIAN: I prefer to listen; please go on.

VIII.

Deist: At the time of the so-called prophets, Micah, Isaiah and others of the Old Testament, the afflictions of the Jews, consequent upon internal dissensions and wars, together with the encroachments of foreign nations, which had reduced them to a state of weakness bordering on annihilation, had rendered them, it would seem, as a nation, fit subjects almost for despair. It was then that these seers, as they were called, following a calling so common in their day, casting their eyes back upon the glory of the nation under David, gave to their countrymen the cheering prediction that there would yet some great leader arise, who, like David, should restore Israel to her former prestige and glory. This leader, or Messiah, as he was sometimes called, Christians attempt to make out was Jesus of Nazareth, born some seven hundred and fifty years thereafter. Coming, as they aver, in fulfilment of what they choose to call prophecies, also, according to these gospels, performing many

wonderful miracles, as well as calling himself the Messiah, they claim he was *divine.* The favored and godly nation, according to Christians, by whom the Messiah was predicted, disclaim and scout him as such, with scorn. It is upon the authority of these gospels alone, then, that his divinity rests.

If that Great Power that rules the universe has once assumed the form of mankind, and so come upon earth to dwell in their midst as a living law for all our race, died and rose again, and has inspired his chosen Evangelists to place upon record a true history of all this for the future benefit of the race, surely we may expect a consistent and harmonious relation of the same, without jar or discord, and so clear and unobscure that he who runs may read and understand. We might also expect that if this Great Power has given us such a record, that he has preserved it also from all corruption. Let us now briefly glance at the record; briefly, I say, as it has been examined fully, and the result given to mankind, but they have spurned

it; and my effort perhaps awaits a no better fate, but I shall have the satisfaction of feeling that I have done what I could to expose falsehood.

The so-called prophets of the Jews had said that the predicted Messiah was to be of the lineage of David, and to be born at Bethlehem. As Jesus was claimed to be the Messiah, two of the Evangelists, inspired by the Great Ruler of the Universe, betook themselves to making out a genealogy of his descent from David, and with such success as to render both, to any sensible man, wholly untrustworthy. The same two also attempted to show that he was born at Bethlehem, with like result. Both the genealogies and the accounts of the birth are so conflicting as to render both worthless. They so differ, that to harmonize their statements is impossible; and if either is right, which? Who shall answer? I repeat, the authority of both is worthless. Do men realize their accusation of Deity when they talk of such inspiration? Following immediately a forged genealogy, to make Jesus a descend-

ant from David through Joseph, both of these Evangelists tell us that he was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and Joseph had no coöperation in the matter.

When men conspire for the deception of mankind, it is seldom their machinations are so successful but some loop-hole is left whereby the fraud may be detected. In this case the "doctors" have left one big enough to drive through with a "coach and four."

But Jesus was to be made a God, and it would not do for a God to come into the world in a natural way. Was not Brahma created from the right side of Deity, Vishnu the left, and Siva from the middle? Was not Lao-Tse the incarnation of a shooting star, eighty years in his mother's womb, and then a God on earth? Was not Sammonocodom born of a virgin and reared on a flower? And was it expected that a successful theology could be constructed resting upon Jesus as the corner-stone without imparting to him a miraculous birth? Certainly not.

I have noticed the contradiction in state-

ments between Matthew and Luke, and here now deliberately charge, confident that the record will bear out the assertion, that, in no single instance where these four "*inspired*" Evangelists have related in common any important event occurring in the life of Jesus, has there not been such disagreement, such discordance or downright contradiction in their statements, as, if not to wholly vitiate and render nugatory the force of their evidence, at least to render doubtful what may be consistently believed. As I have before said, I do not propose here to go into details in this matter, as that, to considerable extent, has already been done; but you, and almost all, have a Testament, and can read and compare for yourselves.

I shall therefore content myself by calling your attention to the relation of some important matters, wherein my assertion may be adjudged.

Look, if you please, at the different statements of the Evangelists as to the movements of Jesus immediately after his baptism by

John; of the calling of the twelve disciples; the death of Judas; the last supper, with the announcement of the treason and the denial; the agony, arrest and trial; the crucifixion; and, especially, the resurrection and the ascension.

Compare their statements in regard to the Mosaic law, and as to whether Jesus intended his Gospel to be preached to the Jews only; notice the passages here, in several instances contradicting each other by the same Evangelist. But what is quite as astounding and incomprehensible to me as all these discordances and contradictions is the *omission* by some of the Evangelists of important miracles related by others. If miracles were as common in those days as the magicians and wonder-workers who performed them, it is hardly probable that the raising of the dead had become so common as to be lost sight of, or to be considered unworthy of the notice of the Evangelists.

Of the raising from death of the daughter of Jairus the Gospel of John makes no mention, though in both Mark and Luke John

is particularly spoken of as having been present. Again, the remarkable miracle of restoring to life the widow's son is mentioned only by Luke. Just observe what a marvellous transaction here is to go unrecorded by three of his apostles, who have attempted to relate to us what they knew of the acts and teachings of Jesus. The funeral procession is stopped; Jesus touches the bier, and calls upon the young man to arise: "and he that is dead sits up and begins to speak."

But the most astounding of all is that no record should have been left, or mention made by either of the Evangelists but John, of the raising of Lazarus. Here is the most wonderful miracle ascribed to Jesus; one of the most wonderful, indeed, in the annals of history; and yet three of the Evangelists, all writing, as is conceded by all commentators, *before* John, have not, while recording the acts and sayings of Jesus, thought it worth while to mention it. I appeal to mankind to tell us how we are to reconcile this with the cause of truth.

Then we have the remarkable miracle at Cana of turning water into wine, and the stories of the woman taken in adultery, and the woman at the well, mentioned *only* by John. On the other hand, again, we are utterly astonished that this same John makes no mention of the Transfiguration, a scene and an occurrence which no human being that had once witnessed it could have ever forgotten, and yet the other Evangelists tell us that John was one of those who were present.

No candid reasoner can fail to admit that such wonderful events, related by one of the Evangelists and ignored by the others, are irreconcilable with a true and faithful history of the acts and teachings of Jesus. Again, is it supposable that such wonderful miracles as the raising of the widow's son and of Lazarus could have been performed in a province of the Roman Empire, at the time ascribed to them, without finding their way into profane history? That such could be the fact is incredible; and these stories go to show what mankind are capable of doing to

accomplish their ends. Jesus was to be made a God, at all hazards.

I think I have now answered your question as to the divinity of Jesus, by showing conclusively that we have no authority sufficiently trustworthy to establish it. I think, also, that when you have read and compared as I have suggested, that you must arrive at the conclusion that the *authority* of the Gospels, as they now stand, cannot be held as more trustworthy than if we admit that they overflow with alterations and interpolations; and that, in either case, it is almost, if not wholly, worthless.

IX.

Christian: I have listened with much interest, and shall not fail to examine the Gospels as you have suggested. I notice, though, you speak of Jesus as if you believed such a being had existed: will you be kind enough to inform me what your belief or opinion may be in regard to him?

Deist: Certainly, and with pleasure.

There is no reason to doubt the existence of such a being; on the contrary, proof in the affirmative is ample. We have the authority of Tacitus as to his crucifixion, and then the innumerable books put forth at about that period, all taking him as the corner-stone, are sufficient evidence.

Of his life and character there can be but one opinion, and that the highest. He taught of one Power that guides and rules over all, and therein all Deists agree with him. His system of morals was of the purest and loftiest, and worthy the acceptance of all mankind. He uttered some of the most beautiful sentiments that ever fell from the lips of mortal man.

You might ask here what authority I may have for this assertion, since I consider the Gospels so untrustworthy; to which I would answer: I do not believe the authors of these Gospels were capable of uttering such sentiments; therefore, as they must have come from somebody, and as Jesus was no doubt a marked man of the age, standing out in

advance of his nation, as did Confucius and Socrates, they may with much confidence be ascribed to him. All this I cheerfully accord to him; but if, as imputed in the Gospels, he believed himself the Messiah, who *within his generation* was to come in the clouds of heaven with the sound of a trumpet, attended by angels in great glory, amid the falling of stars and the shaking of the heavens, to judge the world, then it would appear to me that he let his faith in the predictions of the old prophets, and as having relation to him, get the better of his judgment.

Again, if he taught, as is imputed to him, that the Great Ruler of the Universe had created and would still create innumerable human beings, a small fraction of whom to make eternally happy and the remainder eternally miserable, there again I think he let his faith in the theological works in vogue at his day get the better of his judgment. The failure of his prediction in regard to his second coming is a sufficient disclaimer of his *divinity* by the Gospels themselves; and I

confess to unbounded satisfaction in finding the evidence so conclusive that he was human like myself. It is to think of him as such, subject to our temptations and trials, that causes his life to rise up before us in its true grandeur and sublimity.

While I have the utmost detestation for that net-work of falsehood which has so unscrupulously and wickedly attempted to foist him upon mankind as *divine*, to Jesus, as man, I shall ever point my fellow-men as an example the highest, the purest, and the noblest by which to shape their lives for happiness.

X.

CHRISTIAN: Speaking, as you have been, of the life of Jesus as faultless, and his teachings in the main as not only commendable, but of the highest order, let me ask why you would attempt to subvert the Christian religion, particularly as you have nothing better to offer in place of it?

DEIST: The question you ask is one that has been often raised by the adherents to

your faith, and to which I would answer: I would strive to overturn any system of belief, be it in religion or otherwise, founded upon falsehood, whether I had anything to submit in lieu of it or not.

My friends say to me, Why trouble yourself so much to overthrow the prevailing religion? Let it alone, and it will eventually die a natural death.

They are such as, like Harriet Martineau, have gone down to the root of the superstition, and, having worked out the problem through years, perhaps, of unflinching research, reflection and anxiety, and finding it but a flimsy, half-built, rotten old structure, stuck in the mud, and well knowing how much dirt is thrown into the faces of those who are brave enough to hint its condition, calmly wait for it to sink out of sight. Fortunately, or unfortunately, I am not one of those who can wait so calmly to see the old hovel rot out, and pass away. I abhor falsehood too deeply to have any patience with it. The location of this old hovel is such that I am

well aware the ground which it covers is valuable. I believe, therefore, in attacking it with sledgehammer and crowbar, demolishing it as quickly as possible, clearing away the rubbish of superstructure, ripping up its rickety old foundation; then, digging down through the mud until we reach hard-pan, there laying a foundation upon immortal truth, rear upon it a structure that will defy the ravages of time, or the subtle influences of superstition.

No system can flourish, or be of much benefit to mankind, founded on falsehood; and to overthrow it is to clear away the brushwood, that what is worth preserving may thrive. It is not a question of the life or of the ethics which Jesus taught, but a question of the senseless dogmas which those who, having taken the exemplary Jesus for a corner-stone, have built up about his name. As to whether we have anything to offer, however, that is better, in place of your religion, I think that you are somewhat premature in your assertion.

XI.

CHRISTIAN: Pardon me for having asserted that you had not, and please let me hear what you have to offer that is better in the place of it.

DEIST: I would substitute for it a religion which consists in the adoration of that Being who has created and rules over all, and the love of every human being whom He has created. The creed is short, but it embraces all that is required of mankind.

It is hardly becoming in mankind, to say the least, to ascribe *properties* to a Being of whom they can no more than conjecture, which brings him down, relatively, upon a level with themselves. What reason have we to suppose that a power equal to the creation, and, in so far as we are able to perceive, having made mankind supreme above all else created, has created them for an ill purpose? To affirm that he has belies good sense and maligns the Creator. I have a firm faith of a divine purpose in the creation of mankind, beyond what is

apparent here, and that hope of immortality which springs through *love* spontaneously from the heart. But, our adoration of the Creator is especially made manifest by our love of what he has created. In fact, it is impossible to feel toward him that depth of love we feel toward the parent, the brother or sister, the wife or child. We look up to him in reverence, in profound wonder and awe; we may look up to him in gratitude; the heart may and will turn to him in its sorrows—but the profoundest affections of the heart are toward its kind. It is natural that this should take deepest root in the family, but it must not be confined there; it must extend to all the human race.

What is paramount for mankind is to learn how to live *here* in order to obtain from life the greatest amount of happiness. The happiness of mankind is the highest aim of mankind. We want no other creed, and, when this is once felt and acted upon, society will shoot forward with a bound toward that grand ideal which might now appear as chi-

merical. We are in this religion perplexed by no creeds to stultify the intellect, or corrode the heart. We have not before us the selfish desire to crowd ourselves into an imaginary heaven from which the most of those who surround us, and whom we love and cherish, are debarred. I ask not for such a heaven, and talk not to me of happiness in such.

Such a creed took its root in selfishness, and is unworthy the human heart. We must learn to feel that we are one *universal brotherhood*, and that our duty lies in being just to ourselves and helping each other. Let mankind be properly educated, and evil and corruption will not hold that sway over the human heart heretofore manifested.

Man naturally strives for happiness, and when it is once settled in the mind that this is ever to be obtained only through doing right—doing all in his power to promote the happiness of his fellow-beings, and that wrong-doing leads to unhappiness — he will not long hesitate in his choice. Civilization

is yet but in its infancy, and who shall say what man is not capable of, in morals and righteousness, as well as in the arts and sciences. Belief in the fable that we are descendants of demi-gods, or angelic creatures who ate forbidden fruit, whereby they and their race were accursed, and must ever grovel in evil and folly, is a block before the wheels of progress. As mankind become convinced of the fact (which, thank God, they are becoming rapidly) that, on the contrary, the race have come up, not gone down; that they have risen at least from the most abject barbarism, and, not improbably, from a still lower state of animal organization—they will begin to realize the stride they have made, and the possibilities before them.

Let mankind be educated for obtaining the most *happiness* in the world they live in, and not concern themselves so much about the next. And this, as I have before said, is only obtained in its *fullness* by doing our duty to ourselves and to our fellow-beings. You may tell me, perhaps, that health, wealth,

honor and fame bring happiness. Yes, but not to any great extent, when coupled with a selfish and corrupt heart. If you could but lift the veil, the skeleton would surely be found beneath.

I do not say that doing our duty to our fellow-beings, under our present state of society, must necessarily insure happiness, but I say it cannot be attained to much extent without it. I know that there are good and true men and women sunk so low in poverty that their happiness is meager indeed; but I know, also, that this ought not to be, nor will it be, when the religion that promises its rewards so lavishly to the few, in another world, is superseded by one that will *do more* for the happiness of all in this. We have had preaching enough about living for a future world; let us learn how to live here.

But the fallacies that have been so dogmatically taught in the past have got to be swept away before we can make much progress in the future. These, however, are many, and as I have answered your question as to

what I think might be beneficially substituted for the Christian religion, I would now be happy to hear from you.

CHRISTIAN: I would prefer that you go on.

XII.

DEIST: If you will possess your soul in patience, then, I will endeavor to give you a slight sketch of some of the more important fallacies that have either been instituted or strongly defended by Christians (leaving other religions aside) which have got to be overthrown before we, in Europe and America, can make much progress in the amelioration of the condition of mankind.

In the first place, you ascribe such properties to the Creator as seem to me positively monstrous. The Christian religion is essentially pessimistic; none more so. You profess to nave revealed to you the fact that the Creator of mankind is to torment the greater portion of them eternally, and this for not entirely subverting the capacity for evil which he himself has implanted within

them. Consistent and merciful — now, is it not!

The heart-suffering that has been caused in Christian lands, consequent upon a doctrine so monstrous, is terrible to contemplate. The vision of my own youth rises up before me in all the blackness of its horrors, to substantiate the assertion.

To teach children such a doctrine is monstrous, and yet parents have done it, and continue to do it, thinking they are doing God's service. Yet you say Jesus taught it, and as he was *divine* it must be so. Whether he taught it or not I shall not attempt to decide, but this I say. get better authority that Jesus was divine than you have in the New Testament, before stultifying the mind or debasing the heart to foster such a belief toward the Ruler of the Universe. Happiness on earth would be impossible to a people believing so damnable a doctrine, except that each believes that somehow his own particular friends are going to escape. Away with this

and all other doctrines that malign the Creator!

The story of the fall of man as given in Genesis being nothing but a silly fable, the vicarious atonement of Jesus has no *meaning*, and making him an object of worship is but a degree at least above Fetishism. There is but one being to adore, and that is he who created and rules over all.

Again, the advocates of Christianity point to Europe and America as a positive demonstration of the power of their religion in the promotion of civilization and progress. Will they tell us what caused ancient Greece and Egypt to attain an altitude in civilization so much above the other nations of the globe? Will they tell us why Greece actually retrograded under Christianity, and why Russia has shown so little progress under it? Although I differ from many Liberals, who think that all religions have been of some service to mankind, my own belief is that Christianity, as established, as well as the rest, has been actually a stumbling-block in the cause of progress.

I stand upon the unshaken ground that all religions or systems based on falsehood must necessarily be hindrances to the progress and welfare of mankind.

The truth is, civilization has gone on in Europe and America in spite of Christianity, but not to the extent it would have gone without it. Ask scientific men who have stood most in their path; why, this is too notorious to require repeating. Look at Europe from the time of the despotic establishment of Christianity under Constantine for twelve hundred years, down through the Dark Ages, as they are called, and made dark through this terrible despotism. It was only when the reins were loosened, and men began to think and act independently, and the shackles of the Church were in a measure removed, that civilization and progress began to shoot forward. But more is to be done yet: this fallacy must be completely overthrown, and mankind must plant themselves upon *immortal truth*, before our highest ideal can be realized.

XIII.

The first, and most monstrous, of all scourges which I can allude to that Christianity has sanctioned is *war;* a relic of barbarism, taking its origin at a period when mankind were but little above the brute, it has been resorted to and defended by all the most prominent religions of the globe, and remains to-day a standing disgrace upon our age and humanity. For my part, I would care to know no more of any system of religion, to convince me that it was based upon falsehood and not truth, than to be made aware of the fact that it resorted to this monstrous barbarity to sustain and propagate itself.

But you may ask, How are we to do away with it? To which I would reply: By creating a public sentiment that shall abhor it. And what stands most in the way of so glorious a consummation? False religion—the Church. Look at the spectacle which Russia has just presented us. Under the lying pre-

text of protecting a handful of Christians in Servia, she has caused the murder of more human beings than she affected to protect, besides the immense treasure she has squandered. She has caused in a year more agony and distress than a thousand years of Turkish rule over these Christians would probably have done. And yet you will find nearly every professed Christian in our land a sympathizer with Russia in her horrid barbarities; and this, mind you, not in a war of defense, but in one of invasion, wholesale murder and robbery her object. It is fitting, however, that Russia should have pursued the course she has: she but continues to sail under the false colors of that Church that was founded in falsehood, and has ever resorted to war to sustain and propagate herself. It is plain to be seen that it is not through the instrumentality of the Church that such a public opinion as we would create need be looked for: it must spring up under a new religion, more human, less brutal. We hear much in regard to patriotism as one of the

brightest stars in the constellation of virtue but, really, is there not much delusion in all this? Are not men's hearts contracted by it? What is my country, and who are my countrymen? For one, I answer: My country is the whole surface of the globe on which I live; my countrymen, every human being that dwells thereon. All men are my brothers, be they white, black, or copper color. The same Power created them they are subject to like passions, susceptible to pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, and at best their lives are troubled enough without my adding another pang.

The spirit that sectionalizes, and says, My country, right or wrong, I have no sympathy with. I know this is not the vaunted patriotism of which men prate so much, and I acknowledge I do not possess it. Let the *glory* be taken from war; let it be stigmatized, as it should be, by every lover of his kind, as an ignoble art, a dishonorable profession, an unworthy ambition, and we shall

soon find a way to get along without it. I have too much faith in humanity, notwithstanding all the rascality I have seen in the world, to believe that under the non-combative principle the earth would be turned into anarchy and confusion. It is the principle upon which the world is governed that makes brutes of men. Treat men as human beings if you would have them such. There may be some excuse for men's having cut each other's throats at a time when they had risen but little above the brute, but that day has long passed, and a continuation of this monstrous relic of barbarism to our day should crimson the cheek of every honest lover of his race. And now think of it—this monstrous scourge of mankind is upheld by Christianity; by the professed followers of him they claim to have been divine, when the record they profess to believe divinely inspired quotes him as having said: 'He that smites thee upon the one cheek, turn to him the other, also." Oh, consistency, thou art a jewel!

XIV.

And now a word as to our Government, which is said to be the best in the world, and I shall not dispute it; but when men cry for work and bread and find neither, when women and children starve and die in hovels hardly fit for swine, there is certainly much room for improvement. And how is this improvement to come? I answer: By organizing some system for distributing the product of labor more equally among mankind.

We live in an age ominous of great changes in society, and that which is to come already casts its shadow before. The low murmurings which are now arising both in Europe and America show the working of men's minds, and are the prelude of what is to come. Not much longer can the great producing class be made content to accept "a stone for bread," and the existing state of society which upholds and approves of this must needs be transformed.

America has got rid of chattel slavery—if

not by a course worthy of the highest approval—but she has not yet freed herself of all oppression. The power of the rich to oppress the poor still remains, and my belief is that she is to be the *first*, not *last*, as in the matter of holding mankind as property, to snap this link, and give to the laboring poor the comforts to which they are by right entitled.

If, as a popular leading clergyman with an income of twenty thousand a year has asserted, it is a *means of grace* to a large portion of mankind that they struggle along in life half famished, and hear their children cry in vain for bread, my opinion is, they had better try to secure the bread, if they have to get along without the grace. Glorious position, now is it not, for one to take who claims to be an interpreter of the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth to mankind? Yet he only puts boldly into words what it may be inferred a great portion of his clan approve.

If Jesus of Nazareth taught anything, he taught, and that as emphatically as man could

teach, the spirit, the very essence, of what is to-day understood by the more moderate class of Socialists as *Socialism.* The truth is, this subject is not treated with common fairness or candor by either the pulpit the press, or those generally who fill the most commanding positions in society. Those who accept and advocate its principles are represented as cut-throats and vagabonds; in fact, no epithets or language seem to be sufficiently opprobrious in which to characterize its advocates, or render the subject obnoxious. In speaking of it, the Paris Commune must ever be dragged forward as the symbol of what is embodied in all Socialism and Communism. No honest, well-meaning Socialist defends the horrors of the Commune alluded to, neither is he content to have it held up as a type of Socialism, any more than a Christian would be to have the butcheries of St. Bartholomew's Day under Catharine de Medici brought forward as a type of Christianity.

I have no apologies to make for barbarities committed by mankind, either individu-

ally or in associate bodies, but I would suggest that it is hardly to be expected that when, through some favoring circumstances, a class of citizens who have been kept down, trodden in the dust, as it were, have once acquired power, they are going to show the docility of lambs. As such changes do sometimes occur, it behooves those in power to so ameliorate the condition of this class as to avert the inducement for retaliation whenever they may take place.

The pulpit, the press, and the dominating class in general may inveigh against Socialism with all the force at their command, but they cannot annihilate it. If crushed to the earth it will rise again, as there is a soul of truth in it, which, like Banquo's ghost, will not stay down.

If the people have the moral right to legislate and tax private property at all for the benefit of the community, then it is both their right and duty to extend this purpose just so far as is necessary for the general good of the whole body politic. It is not for the general

good of the community for a portion to roll in wealth and luxury, and another portion to starve in hovels; therefore it is the duty of the Government to regulate such inequalities. Why this has not heretofore been done in our republic, where the government is in the hands of the people, is really astonishing. No bullets are required to accomplish this purpose, for if there were I would be the last one to advocate it; *ballots* only are necessary, and these are ten to one in the hands of those who would be benefited by using them in a cause so worthy; in reality, *all* would thus be benefited.

But, again, if the Government has the right to interfere with the property of the individual for the general welfare of the community, it has also the moral right to compel every able-bodied citizen who has taken the responsibility of a family upon himself to labor for the support of that family, as he has covenanted with society to do, if not possessed of other means for their support. Such citizens without families might be given their choice to

work or starve. Able-bodied citizens, therefore, who have not the means to live without, should be compelled to labor for their own support and that of those dependent upon them, and it should be the duty of society to furnish employment to such; as, also, to maintain in comfort all those without means of support, or without parents or natural protectors whose duty it was to support them, who, from bodily or mental infirmities, are incapacitated for obtaining their own livelihood.

Every individual who by his own exertions may honestly accumulate, or to whom property is transmitted, is fairly entitled to an amount sufficient to support himself and those dependent upon him, by the ties of kindred, in comfort through life, with the privilege of transmitting the same at his decease; but I deny the moral right of any man who, either from more favorable circumstances, less conscience, or greater natural ability for accumulating, piles up enormous wealth and holds it for his own selfish gratification, or squanders it luxuriously or ostentatiously, while his fellow-beings about

him grovel, famish and die in poverty. Manipulating individually the estate of an Astor, a Stewart, or a Vanderbilt, and many lesser ones, is a moral wrong, and if the people have the right to tax such estates at all for the benefit of the community, they have the right to tax them to a degree commensurate with the greatest general good, providing this does not detract from the comfort or normal desires of the individual.

I would, therefore, fix an amount above which no individual should be permitted to hold property. This should be made so liberal as not to discourage or check individual enterprise except in cases of inordinate greediness for gain, the desire for which it would have the effect to restrain. Property so acquired should go to the State. Taxation upon a sliding scale should also be established, with the rate much the higher upon the highest valuation.

The greedy, as well as the inanimate old fossils who prate so much of subverting the order of society which has resulted from

growth and experience, will of course scout such innovation. They are oblivious to the fact that society is, and, in order to obtain progression, must necessarily continue, in a constant state of transition. They would have us live by the chase, or scratch the ground with a tooth-pick, eat with our fingers or forked sticks, travel on foot, burrow in the earth or hide in bark tents, worship an owl or a stone, if such were the present state of society, sanctioned by *long experience*, rather than tolerate any innovation. Innovation! why, innovation is indispensable to quell the inordinate greediness of the few, and bring comfort and happiness to the many.

And yet we find the most rabid defenders of such a state of society tied up to some Christian church, in fact the pillars of it, sitting in the highest place: in short, not an abnormity, but the natural and genuine production of so-called Christian society. And this in the face of that injunction, given by their professed Master, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Oh, consistency art thou not truly a jewel!

XV.

And now let us take up the Social question, which, in its more extended view, absorbs nearly all other questions, but which will be noticed here only in one of its most hideous phases, that we may discover what are the influences of Christianity, under its present organization, upon the social relations of mankind.

How much misery is caused in this world by the nonsensical striving to pass ourselves off as a little superior to, or better than, our fellows! This is a curse which produces more envy, more jealousies, more heart-burnings, more pain, more tears, and more nonsense, than any other nonsensical thing under the sun. We have acquired, perhaps, a little more wealth, or knowledge, or fame; or are of a more noted family; or live in a better house, and wear better clothes, than our neighbor—and imme-

diately we expect the whole world to doff their hats to us, and pay us the deference our conceit dictates. Oh, puny, pusillanimous little bladder of mortal clay, puffed up with conceit and vanity, what a veritable ass you are capable of making yourself! Nevertheless, we should pity and excuse, as you are but the natural outgrowth of a society that not only tolerates, but generates and fosters, such ninnies.

I do not object, but, on the contrary, hold, that suitable respect and honor should be paid *true worth;* but this silly *assumption*, based on conceit and vanity, we meet at every turn, I have no patience with. Such a state of society can be but deadly to the happiness of those living under it.

What if we know we are superior to some we come in contact with: does this warrant us in passing them by, or treating them with indifference, or in any way making them feel their inferiority? Are we to draw sharp lines, and to associate only with those who move in our prescribed circle? I

can discover in this neither religion, good sense, nor the evidence of one who loves his kind. If we are really superior to our fellow-beings, let us show our humanity by an attempt to elevate them intellectually and morally, rather than treat them with indifference or scorn; and this cannot be done without familiar intercourse.

Now, in our country at least, from what source principally arises and is nurtured this hydra of assumptive superiority, with its concomitant, exclusiveness? I answer, the Church. This needs no argument, as it is, in fact, almost a truism, but may be alluded to in some of its particulars in speaking of *the Church* direct, to which I now proceed.

XVI.

Were I asked to name what I consider the greatest anomaly, or perhaps I should say enigma, of the age, I should most certainly answer, The Christian religion; and I feel quite positive that I should be right, except its equal be found in some other religion that I

am not so familiar with. Let us look at the subject, now. It is computed that there are about two hundred million human beings on the earth that believe in this religion. Now let us see what they believe in, and why they believe in it. They believe that the Almighty, the Great Creator and Ruler of the Universe, came upon this earth as man cometh (that is, was born of a woman), that he lived for about thirty years in obscurity, working at the carpenter's trade, not knowing who or what he was. He was eventually told by his followers that he was the Almighty, and finally came to the conclusion that he was, himself. He then tells these followers that this earth which he had created was about to come to an end; that it would come to an end *within the generation* then in existence; that he was coming from the clouds in great glory to judge all mankind, both the living and the dead; that a small fraction of them he should make eternally happy, and the balance eternally miserable.

Well, what has happened? The Almighty

died upon the cross, but old Mother Earth remains yet, and keeps moving on in the even tenor of her way, and has all the appearance of continuing to roll along for some time to come. And yet the faith of Christians appears to be in nowise abated. Well, faith is glorious, I suppose, if not very wise. And now, what is this transcendent faith, possessed by these two hundred million Christians, founded upon? Upon a Book; and this is the book which teaches just what I have related above. And still there is no abatement in faith. And this book originated some seventeen or eighteen centuries ago, among a half-civilized and one of the most superstitious people upon the face of the globe. It is not corroborated, in any essential particular, by the record of any other nation; there is no positive knowledge as to who the authors of the most vital portions of it were: and still there is faith. Well, what more? This: The four (or four hundred, perhaps) authors who give the history of the life, teachings, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of this God give such an inconsistent,

discrepant, contradictory statement of nearly all the more important events and matters as to render the whole untrustworthy to any unprejudiced mind. Yet there is faith, and indeed, to swallow it all, there is much need of faith.

I say there is faith. Well, to hear Christians *talk* you would suppose there was, but when we come to see how they *live*, the matter is not quite so clear. Let us see how this thing is. Their God, according to the record, taught that mankind should *love* and do good one to another; that they *resist not evil;* that those who took up the sword should perish by the sword—but, strange to say, the Church established under his name has slain its millions by the sword, and by every other damnable instrument of destruction that was ever invented. It took up the sword the moment it had attained sufficient power to maintain it, and has never yet laid it down. It drinks blood as the child drinks milk, and seems to delight in it. The chosen, or self-appointed, expounders of its faith advocate it; its follow-

ers clothe themselves in its finery, and, equipped with all the implements of destruction, march to the whistle of the fife and the roll of the drum, all eager for the fray.

Their God taught, also (according to the record, let it always be understood), that an abundance of things pertaining to this life was not to be coveted; that riches were to be despised; to take no thought of what they should eat or wear, but to sell what they had and give to the poor: in short, that it was nearly, if not quite, impossible for a rich man to enter heaven. And, now, how do we find his followers in this respect? Quite as eager, I think, as the heretics to get all they can, and keep all they get, if possible. Who are those who live in sumptuous palaces, decorated with all the art that man has been equal to devise, and brought together from the four quarters of the globe? Whose tables are loaded with the luxuries of every clime? Who appear in gaudy equipages, with all the gilded trappings of a prince or potentate, flunkies not excepted? Who carry upon their persons

value sufficient to support a dozen families of the abject poor for a decade? Who, instead of giving directly to the poor, get up charity-balls, where only one-tenth, perhaps, of the gross expenditure reaches those it affects to aid? These you will find to be the pillars of the Church, usually.

Nor are the clergy far, if any, behind the laity in this matter. The vicegerent of God on earth lives in a palace which, in magnificence, I am impotent to describe, had I the disposition to attempt it. The ostentation both he and his cardinals display is on an equality with royalty, and bishop and priest ape this so far as lies in their power. And how far different do we find the Protestant clergy in this respect? Offer them a hundred dollars or so more salary, and immediately they have "a call from God" at another station. They grieve to leave their loved brethren, but their *health* requires a change.

And so we find the greater portion of these professed followers of him who had not where to lay his head, and who denounced

riches, eager in the scramble to obtain them, and quite satisfied to take their chances of getting into that heaven which, with riches, it is almost impossible to attain.

Again, their God charges his followers to be meek and lowly in spirit. Let the misguided individual, respectable, but plainly clad, who, fresh from the study of the New Testament, and apprehending from its teachings that the followers of the lowly Jesus of Nazareth must necessarily be unaffected and social, with a place in their hearts for all humanity, presume to enter one of our fashionable (and they are mostly such) Protestant temples, and see how long it will take him to become convinced that he has been laboring under a very natural, but stupendous, delusion. Such a one might as well try to gain, unaided, the interior of an enemy's fort, armed and defended with all the implements of modern warfare, as to expect to obtain recognition, or anything like familiar intercourse, with modern Christian society. Why, buckram is plia-

ble in comparison with the stiffness of a fashionable Christian church.

The castes of India do not excel the snobbishness found here. Nor is this confined to any particular locality, but is almost universal wherever a Christian temple can be found. Now find, if you can, an expression sufficiently caustic to characterize any human being who professes to be a follower of Jesus of Nazareth and yet lends himself or herself to such contemptible folly. Boiled-down hypocrisy would not do it justice.

I find in the gospel of the Christians a divine injunction which reads as follows:

"And when thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret," etc.

And now what do we find Christians, even their clergy, continually doing but just what the hypocrites here spoken of were said to have

done, and which is here *divinely* forbidden. Verily, the ways of Christians are dark and obscure.

Again, the prophet of straw gave unto the Jews a commandment that the seventh day, or Sabbath, should be set apart and kept as a *holy* day, on which no work or play should be permitted. The Almighty (according to Christians) practically ignores this; and yet what do Christians do but follow the fictitious prophet instead of the Almighty. The indifference and contempt of Jesus for the rigid observance of this day is plainly shown in the record given of him. If to *do good* upon the seventh, or Sabbath, day was creditable and praiseworthy, who shall say how far this may not be carried? Would it not be *doing good* for a poor laborer to work and earn his dollar or so on that day, to add to the comfort of a half-famished family? In short, is not all honest, secular employment which adds to the comfort of mankind *doing good?* My own view is that, from the contempt manifested by Jesus for the observance of this Jewish law, we may

safely infer that he gave it no countenance. It may possibly be beneficial to mankind to cease from labor upon every seventh day, but compelling the same by statute, because some ignorant and superstitious Jew said twenty-five hundred years ago that the Creator of the Universe demanded it, is as despotic as it is senseless.

I am not aware that there are any *divine* commands in the Gospels relative to the build ing of temples in which to worship, but when I see around me those that have cost from a half million to a million dollars, and others, scattered all over the land, comparatively as extravagant, they have to me much more the appearance of *objects of worship* than of places in which to worship. A million-dollar temple, with millionaires scattered about it, and a twenty-five-thousand-dollar-a-year clergyman preaching Jesus of Nazareth to them, and how they might possibly stand one chance out of a million, say, by some hook or crook, of getting into that almost impossible heaven, is an anom-

aly that passeth all understanding. What an opportunity for an artist!

If it be admitted that temples in which to worship and adore the Creator are necessary, I submit that plain, simple structures for this purpose would be much more in consonance with the spirit of that *leader* whom Christians profess to follow. In this, as in most other respects, the Quakers have set an example far more in harmony with the spirit of this *leader*, and yet what are they but objects of contempt and ridicule for the prevailing pompous spirit of Christianity? But what need have we of temples in which to worship? The worship and adoration of the Supreme is an individual matter, that finds its fitness, as I view it, only in *solitude.*

I might go much farther, but I have carried the matter far enough, I think, to demonstrate that the Christian religion is, as before asserted, the greatest *riddle* of the age. We find here a society of nearly two hundred million human beings, organized, established, and promulgating for fifteen centuries principles

that are diametrically opposite to those which they themselves profess to believe came to mankind directly from the lips of the Almighty. I might go much farther to show that the pretensions of the Church are delusive, and that she does not institute or cherish, in the main, such principles as are conducive to the welfare and happiness of mankind. But for the present I rest here.

XVII.

The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is an attempt, by a semi-barbarous and superstitious people, to solve questions which are impossible of solution by mankind. Through *truth* this could not, of course, be done; therefore fable and falsehood were resorted to.

It is apparent that the Christian religion, as a verity, cannot satisfy the human intellect; by ascribing attributes to the Deity that are absolutely fiendish, it cannot reach the human heart; and neither in its practical operation is it, nor can it be made, conducive to the happiness of mankind: therefore it is high time that it was supplanted by a religion more in

consonance with the intellectual development of the age and the nobler attributes of the human heart.

The position taken that a portion of mankind must necessarily continue to grope its way along in poverty and corruption; that we must continue to lord it over each other, cut each other's throats, and live like beasts generally, is a libel upon the race — a falsity born in selfishness and supported by a false religion. Let us have a religion that will embrace the adoration of Deity, the morality and the love of humanity taught by Jesus of Nazareth, shorn of the false dogmas that have attached themselves to his teachings, and mankind have in *it* an object to strive for worthy of their highest endeavor.

What a world might be made of this, could mankind only learn the simple art, and put in practice the simple means, through which they might secure to themselves and to their race the greatest amount of happiness! Let them, say, root out from the heart a large share of that old chronic selfishness, and

cultivate in its stead true altruism, or, in other words, learn to love their neighbor about, or quite, as well as themselves.

It may be said that this is an old doctrine, and it is, of course, but the difference is, I would teach it unattended by miracles, miraculous births, false resurrections and ascensions, or any other doctrine that I lacked the authority to sustain. But I have alluded to this much abused and unwarrantably traduced old world of ours, uncomfortable as it often appears, upon the supposition that mankind had learned to live in it in a manner essential to secure to each and all the greatest amount of happiness.

A vision of it, so conditioned, has often presented itself to my imagination, and though it is impossible for me to convey to another the beauties realized in the ideal, I will make an attempt to outline the same, leaving the figure to be filled in according to the fancy of the artist.

I see, first, all differences between nations settled peaceably by a congress or by arbi-

tration, and all implements of war destroyed or turned into necessary implements of peace, all armies and navies disbanded, and those therein engaged become a producing class.

I see free trade the world over, with direct taxation for the support of the Government, and such of the people as are physically or mentally incapacitated for their own support, should this be found necessary.

I see the laws for the government of society so few that all may become familiar with them, lawyers a nonenity, and differences in judgment or opinion arbitrated by honest and impartial judges.

I see all willing to perform their due share of labor, as one of the requisites through which health and happiness are reached and maintained.

I see, as the result of these changes, such prosperity and abundance in the land that the hours of labor may be greatly reduced, leaving much time to all for recreation, travel, and for the cultivation of the mind.

I see this opportunity for culture improved,

and such advancement in the race that the lowest will soon stand where now stand the highest, and these still soaring higher, reaching out into the dark *unknown*, beyond any conception we are able to form at the present.

I see no individual, excessive or superfluous wealth, or abject poverty, but every human being with a comfortable home, well clad, and with the necessaries and comforts of life in abundance.

I see mechanical inventions, as well as the fine arts, so far as useful for the elevation of mankind, carried to a state of perfection beyond our present comprehension.

I see fashion, vanity, affectation, ostentation, luxury, as well as all kinds of intemperance, dishonesty, vice and crime, abandoned, and mankind associating together upon one common level, happy beyond comparison.

I see but one religion, and that consisting in the adoration of the Creator and Ruler of the Universe, and the love of our fellow-beings.

I see this life regarded as but a stepping-stone to a life beyond, and all fear of death obliterated.

I see physiology and the laws of health familiar to every human being at an early age.

I see mankind so perfected, physically and morally, that no disease or moral taint is inherited by their offspring; and finally, when they have remained here for a century (unless sooner removed by accident), fall like ripe fruit, and, calmly, as they would retire for a night's repose, pass away to a higher state of existence beyond.

Would you tell me that all this—and much more—is unattainable by mankind? You could not make me believe it, if you should. When we reflect upon the condition of being from which the race have sprung, such acquirements no longer appear fanciful. What man has accomplished in the last century seemed as unattainable to him at its commencement as what is herein foreshadowed. If something similar to what is given here comes not in the next

century, it surely will come in process of time, and the true benefactor of his race is he who accomplishes all in his power to advance it. This will not be him who sits with folded arms and prays for it, however, but he who *works* with a will.

Never in the history of the race have the minds of men been more agitated upon the great problem of life than at the present time. The need is felt of a reconstruction of society more in harmony with the intelligence, the requirements and the aspirations of the age, unhampered by a barbarous superstition or a defunct theology; and, if indications are not illusive, we are now upon the eve of such a reconstruction as will carry mankind, during the coming century, a long stride forward toward the final consummation of that high state of perfection and happiness destined for the race on earth, which is now only conceivable by those who have the highest faith in the possibilities attainable by their fellow-beings, and in the design of Him who rules and guides.

Centuries may roll around before all that

is foreshadowed here is attained; rulers may continue to cause the butchery of their subjects; mankind will still oppress their fellows; children will suffer, women weep, and men groan in misery and despair; many will yet plod on in ignorance and superstition; intemperance will debauch, and crime cast its dark shadow over the land: but still, just as sure as it is that the sun will rise on the morrow, so true is it that the course of mankind is ever onward and upward, in each successive age rising higher and higher, and so must continue until this fair Earth is peopled by a race of human beings so perfected physically, intellectually and morally as to render it equal to the Heaven of the poet's imagination. Happy they who, with bright hopes of the future, exert themselves to bring about so glorious a consummation; and happy, thrice happy, they who shall hereafter live in the full enjoyment of its reality.

CHRISTIAN: You have truly a glorious ideal of the future of our race, and, if I am

not fully able to share this now, you have given me much food for reflection, which is not undervalued, rest assured, and it shall have that full and impartial consideration to which it is justly entitled.

THE PROPHETS.

THE PROPHETS.

I.

Amazed am I no Christian bard hath sung,
Or pious Jew the sacred lyre hath strung
To sing the praises of the prophets old,
The unknown past revealed, the future told;
Some Milton, or some Dante, it would seem,
Had woke the muse on this majestic theme,
And told in measured cadences sublime
What I can only tell in limping rhyme.
It matters not; no longer shall this stain
On thoughtless and ungrateful man remain.

If not like Milton mount I to the skies,
Nonsense I'll treat as such, and lies as lies;
If not like Dante go I down to hell,
'Tis 'cause I never thought I'd like the smell;
And if I write not poetry, the truth
I'll stick to, as blockheads do, and youth.
Now to all readers let me say, Beware!
For truths momentous must yourselves prepare:
Prepare to hear whence all things sprang, and why—
But never need prepare to hear a lie;
Prepare to wonder and to be amazed,
Prepare to be at times a little crazed,
Prepare with horror oft to be transfixed,
Prepare to hear of things "a little mixed,"
Prepare to know a prophet in his wrath;
For all things else prepare, but not to laugh.

A solemn theme we've chosen for our song:
Draw down thy face and make it very long.

II.

I speak of Manu first, the mighty seer
Of far-off Ind., the first that did appear
Inspired by the Most High, as we are told,
His statutes to impart and works unfold.
Great was Manu, offspring of the Supreme:
He tells how the gods were made — three,
'twould seem.
Beside the Great First Cause, there were
Brahma
The Second, the great Vishnu, and Siva:
The first from the right side of Brahma stept,
Great Vishnu next from out the left was swept,
And then great Siva from the belly crept.
How grand! had I the pen of Milton here,

With what sublimity this should appear!
But grander far than his theogony
The story given of the Cosmogony:
The waters first great Brahma did create,
And into these, as Manu doth relate,
He cast a seed: the seed became transformed
Into a golden egg, and, all unharmed,
Therein the mighty Brahma lay concealed
For a full year or more, nor yet revealed,
When his great mind by one tremendous stroke
The golden egg into two pieces broke,
And, wondrous as his miraculous birth
From the two shells, created Heaven and Earth.
How very grand! again for Milton's pen
To stamp the grandeur on the minds of men.
But hearken! the great Manu stops not here:
Into the life beyond the mighty seer

Hath a keen, clear vision, and tells us how
We may be changed into a bob-tailed cow,
A tiger, elephant, horse, dog or cat,
A lizard, frog, perhaps a long-tailed rat.
Thus teach the Vedic hymns Brahma inspired;
Such to believe good Brahmans are required;
And many million souls do now profess
Belief in what they teach, nor dare do less.
Enough for Manu: now let Zerdusht speak,
And on the *Brahman faith* his curses wreak.
He was the mighty one whom Ormuzd sent
To teach mankind what they had never dream't;
God and his attributes he plainly saw,
As wisely comprehended divine law;
Yet as one god, alone, attempts to show,
He gets so mixed that clearly he makes two:
The god of darkness and the god of light,

In future, man must ever keep in sight;
A kingdom each must have, wherein to dwell,
And so was first invented Heaven and Hell.
The Deva priests did Zerdusht so detest,
Hell was invented for their future rest,
And the innumerable host of time
Who held not *him* a prophet, great, divine;
But for *his* followers there should be given
A happy home of rest, and this was Heaven.
And it was Zerdusht who did first proclaim
What Christian priests have labored to sustain:
The four Evangelists did make a study—
I mean the resurrection of the body.
But then the Gospels, it must be confessed,
Have made a muss of it that looks distressed;
Their *discrepancies*, called by no worse name,
The dogma make appear a little lame.

As Zerdusht says, 'tis this was to be done:
A general resurrection was to come,
Which was to be foretold by Zerdusht's son.
Of angels Zerdusht tells us by the score;
But this had Manu told us of before.
Offerings and sacrifices, we're told,
Was by God commanded in days of old;
And so, long before Moses, the he-goat
Appeased God's wrath with many a cut-throat.
The Christian rites forestalled, herein we see;
The consecrated bread and wine, and the
Expiation, which we find did consist
In flagellation and gifts to the priest;
So to the great Iranian is due
The gist that's claimed by Christian and by
Jew;
Many of their rites, much of their belief,

First sprang from the great Iranian chief·
Let credit fall, say I, where credit's due,
Whate'er the merit, and if false or true:
And why should Jew or Christian be ashamed
To grant him the credit who first proclaimed
The great primeval tenets of their faith,
As, clear it is, the Parsee prophet hath?

III.

Next comes a race with prophets of their own,
Who make all the hidden mysteries known
Great was the Hebrew race; and by the score
Their prophets had, such as were ne'er before;
The fighting prophet and the long-haired seer
In leathern girdle bound did then appear:
To these the dark unknown was opened wide,
(Though ignorant enough in all beside);
At least so say the Christians and the Jews;

Zerdusht says, to *him :* have it as you choose.
Or did God t' *both* his wondrous works reveal ?
It must be so, for prophets would not steal.
Of Hebrew prophets, cannot speak of all;
Time is too short on this terrestrial ball :
Of the most noted, only, can we speak,
And start with Moses, meekest of the meek.
In sunny Egypt, long ago, 'tis said,
Down by the Nile a Pharaoh's daughter strayed :
There, made of rushes, a queer ark she spied ;
A boy within, like other children cried :
She had him reared, and claimed him as her own ;
This much the prophet's infancy is known.
She little thought the foundling would aspire
To beard the proud successor of her sire :

How sad it is the prophet hath not told
Us of his youth, that we our boys might mould
From such a model into perfect men:
Just think what might the human race have been!
But of his after-life the record's clear;
Earth stood amazed before the mighty seer.
The wicked wretch who dared to raise his hand
Against a Jew he slew (at *god's* command,
Must be supposed), and hid him in the sand.
The chosen few god did before select,
He raised an arm, 'twas mighty to protect;
With pride we note his first recorded act;
The next, we're compelled to admit the fact,
Is not so bold: it seems he ran away,
Much as murderers do in this, our day.
He fled to Midian, and took a wife,

Like other men, began a shepherd's life.
But now, the first act passed, the curtain falls:
From out the burning bush Jehovah calls—
"I am that I am," Jehovah saith, "and thou,
A murderer and refugee, do now
A great magician make: thou with thy rod
Shall the Egyptian teach how great thy god.
Go back to Egypt, and my people bring
From out the land of their long-suffering:
Steal not Egyptian jewels, but borrow
To cheer thy fair daughters in their sorrow.
What! dost thou fear? Cast down thy rod
and see
What, through my power, the rod shall quickly
be:
A snake; take hold his tail, and see once more
The rod, as in thy hand it was before."

And other signs to Moses yet were given
To prove himself the God of Earth and Heaven.
Still Moses fears, and pleads a lack of speech;
His brother Aaron's help he doth beseech:
Jehovah, angry first, doth now consent,
And Aaron's made spokesman, 'cause eloquent.
Here we behold the prophet's mighty sway;
Jehovah yields, and Moses wins the day:
'Twas fixed that Aaron wield the magic rod
Before Pharaoh, and Moses be his god.
Now unto Pharaoh came the mighty twain,
Their rod into a serpent turned again:
Yet what do Pharaoh's wicked charmers do
But turn their rods into vile serpents, too;
And yet when this, great Aaron's vipers saw,
They swallowed all, as we do oysters raw.
Next, Aaron turns the rivers into blood,

But this he finds that Pharaoh's charmers could;
Then turns to frogs; in this he finds his match,
But with the lice did Pharaoh's charmers catch.
Here the Egyptian yields; finds in a trice
They were no match for Hebrews breeding lice.
As could not manufacture lice from dust
The contest they abandon in disgust.
The wonder's not such wicked scamps should fall,
The wonder is they did succeed at all;
A wondrous age, such miracles were wrought
By wicked men the devil must have taught.
'Tis strange, again, th' *Egyptian* has not told
The wondrous works there wrought in days of old;
But not a scrap their history hands down;
Only for Moses all had been unknown.

The reason is, no doubt, they were ashamed
To show how they were whipped, and can't
be blamed.
Pharaoh's compelled to let the Hebrews go
To that fair land where milk and honey flow;
The land their god hath promised them forever;
The land they ne'er should quit, never, no,
never.
To the great Abraham had not god swore
Canaan should be his own forevermore?
I only say, it cannot be denied
That Abram, Moses, or his god, has lied.
Moses on Egypt turns his back again,
The leader now of all the Hebrew clan;
Not, as before, the frightened refugee,
But prophet now, he claims, of Deity.
He leads his mighty host across the sea,

A trap for Pharaoh's host, which was to be;
The waters recede, and form a wall around,
They walk dry-shod along the hallowed ground:
And Pharaoh's host dash on in mad pursuit,
To find a watery grave for man and brute:
The sea flows back as it had been before,
And chariots, horses, riders, seen no more.
And this is Moses' wondrous tale, but lo!
There's quite another told by Manetho:
He says the Jews were leprous, lousy, vile,
And Egypt's king did send them 'cross the Nile
To work the quarries, that he might prevent
Their foul disease spreading to more extent;
Of a ruined city they possession took,
Called Avaris, now long had been forsook.
The lousy clan, 'twould seem not void of sense,
The place behold well suited for defense;

Their ire was up, did meditate revolt;
I will not say in this they were at fault.
They chose a leader from within their clan,
And this was Moses, priest and meekest man.
They took the men from out the quarries 'round
And built a wall about the ruined town;
To Shepherd Kings, who long ago rebelled,
And from this ruined town had been expelled,
Or, rather, to their offspring, Moses sent
Ambassadors to make known his intent:
If they, in time of need, assistance lent,
Their long-lost Avaris they would restore,
Which was their father's pride in days of yore.
At once the bait was swallowed, hook and all:
Across the Syrian desert, at their call,
Their warriors came and joined the lousy band,
And horrid carnage reigned thro'out the land.

Successful first, the rebels did commit
Such deeds as hell itself might well befit·
But Egypt's king now rallies for the fray,
And deals such blows as quickly win the day:
The rebels fly across the sandy plain,
And back to Egypt never come again.
Manetho's story I've thought best to tell;
You like the other better: just as well.
Compared with Moses, Manetho is tame;
For lack of miracle he is to blame.
Miracles are racy and exciting,
While truth is tame, and hardly worth the writing.
All religions with miracles abound;
If one on truth and sense we could but found,
I've sometimes thought it might grow strong and great;

But, then, we know the fools predominate.
To Moses' record we shall now return,
And profane history will henceforth spurn:
The Red Sea o'er, and Pharaoh buried deep,
With clams and mermaids to forever sleep,
Israel, their great leader, now obey,
And start for Canaan, right the other way.
In forty years, or so, they will be there;
What matters it which way they go, or where?
They lived so high in Egypt, must be taught
To live on manna now, and scorn th' flesh-pot,
Except a quail or two may be thrown in
While passing through the wilderness of Sin.
If sometimes they are tempted to complain,
Their leader speaks, and all is hushed again;
They fall like slaves and tremble at his feet
When bitter waters he has turned to sweet,

And when he strikes the rock a stunning blow
And forth the limpid waters quickly flow.
But other test now comes to try his skill:
To fight is now first asked of Israel,
But light is war when fought by miracle.
The Amaleks, they find, dispute the way,
And Joshua's troops are eager for the fray;
Moses again brings forth the magic rod
That did Egyptians teach how great his god:
He lifts the rod, the Israelites prevail;
He lets it drop, the Israelites now fail;
A sort of Simon wig-wag work, you see,
Or kind of tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee.
But Hur and Aaron, just in time, come round
And stay his hand until the sun goes down:
'Twas thus the wicked Amaleks were swept
From off the face the earth, unsung, unwept;

For what? Daring to raise their impious hands
In defense of homes, kindred, and of lands,
Against God's holy, heavenly, chosen few,
The circumcised of earth, the noble Jew.
This warning let us ever keep in sight,
And, if our cause is just, no Hebrew fight.
With bated breath we near the sacred mount
Where god to Moses all things did recount,
From how the world was made, and all within,
The fall of man, and origin of sin,
Even to Aaron's coat, the very hue
A mixture, say, of scarlet and sky-blue.
'Tis strange that Moses had not told us more
Of how his god appeared; this we deplore;
'Twould seem that forty days and forty nights
Had deep impressed the image on his sight;
He speaks of having met him face to face;

Again he saw his back parts, by his grace;
I say *his god*, and let it here be known
'Tis of *his god* I speak, and not my own.
A corporeal god I ne'er could conceive;
Leave such to those who may in such believe.
That his god was corporeal 'tis plain,
For "after his own image he made man";
Or so says Moses, and he ought to know,
For unto him he did his image show.
In speaking of god's person, was concise;
Of what he said, that surely will suffice,
And it is our pleasure now to rehearse
The pith of what he said, in homely verse.

IV.

'Twas ours, before, the wonders to relate,
How this vast world great Brahma did create;
It seems that we were shockingly deceived,

For which great sin we hope to be reprieved;
We took an *inspired prophet* for our guide,
And now we find the pious rascal lied,
As all that's known and all that can be true
We find is given us by the noble Jew.
In place of Brahma, with his magic egg,
We find this world was built up peg by peg;
Much as the cobbler plies his simple trade,
So this vast world and all within were made.
Six days the creator wrought, then did rest:
No doubt the work was hard, and he was pressed
To have it done in time, else the seventh day
Had not been blessed, on which no work or play.
And when all else was made, from out the dust
Sprang man, and woman too; follow she must—
But stop! this story must have been a fib,

For next we're told she's made from Adam's rib,
And ever since it's been the aim of man
To get his cutlet back whene'er he can.
Just think of what a world this might have been:
Only for woman, there had been no sin!
Say if some dirty cur had sneaked about
And stole that rib, and left the woman out:
The serpent had found nothing then to tempt,
(The rascal's time, no doubt, were better spent)
And we'd been rollicking now in paradise,
A jolly set of bachelors; how nice!
'Tis strange that ere the honeymoon had passed
The happy pair supposed would ever last,
That god should send them such enticing fruit,
They thought, no doubt, it would exactly suit,
With it the devil in that cursed snake

To so entreat, Eve thought she must partake:
I say it seemeth strange it was allowed
Over their honeymoon to cast a cloud.
Again, I own, I cannot comprehend
Why Moses' god that monstrous bath should
send
To drown a people on account their sin,
Then raise another of th' same kith and kin,
As wicked, too, for aught that I can see,
Except the Jews, models of piety.
I cannot grasp these things; but let them pass;
'Tis 'cause, no doubt, I'm such a stupid ass.
Now, Moses' god was god of Abram, too;
In fact, was god of every stupid Jew;
He also made himself familiar quite:
Where'er they turned, be it to left or right,
Their god was there; was always in their sight;

He blesses those whom blessings had for Jews,
And curses those such blessings did refuse;
He counsels Abram how to tell a lie
For Sarah's beauty, that he may not die;
It is to be inferred he lent his aid
To Abram, in seducing Sarah's maid;
It cannot be denied, gives his advice
To turn her out to starve, which was not nice.
He talks with Abram every night and morn,
And names his children long before they're born;
Disputes with Sarah 'bout the coming child,
Tells her she lies, although he does it mild;
Listens to Abram, when Sodom he'd destroy,
And to him yields, as if he were a boy.
For one omniscient and omnipotent,
He sometimes tried a queer experiment:

Witness, when Abraham he did command
To take a journey to a distant land,
And take his boy, of thirty years, or so,
And burn him there, for what, I do not know:
Abraham strides his ass, he was so good,
On Isaac's back he piles a load of wood,
Climbs a high hill, makes ready for a fire,
Lays Ike thereon, whom much he did admire;
Now, fire in hand, also the keen-edged knife,
He "goes for" Ike, and means to take his life;
When lo! his god convinced becomes, at last,
That Abram fears him, and is getting fast;
Cries out to hold! not sacrifice the lad,
It was only a joke; 'twould be too bad
To kill the boy, while he a long-horned ram
Had sent on purpose for great Abraham.
A god that did, we've seen, a murderer choose

To write his laws for man, and spread the news,
Is just the god his favors would bestow
On wily Jacob, as he did, we know;
And Esau found his offering wouldn't do,
Loses his birthright, and his blessing too.
Now, Moses tells us Jacob was so strong
He wrestled with his god a whole night long,
And would be wrestling yet, no doubt have I,
But god, unfairly, touched him on the thigh;
So strong he was, o'er god he did prevail,
His blessing wrenched, and then's called *Israel.*

V.

And now our pleasure it shall be to tell
How Moses' god as lawyer did excel:
Commandments he gives about half a score,
But these, 'twould seem, were given man before;
At least, if not the same, so similar

It can't be claimed original they were;
They're good, but must confess I fail to see
In them what had not seemed to man to be,
Without a special charge or prophecy,
About the thing, when first it did appear
He owed his fellow-man some duty here.
One great commandment is, "Thou shalt not
kill";
But, mind you, now, he qualifies this well:
May kill thy servant—he thy money is;
No rights allowed a menial wretch like this;
Neither this law for prophets who confess
To having killed their millions, more or less.
A stubborn people who dare raise their hands
Defending homes, their kindred and their lands,
Against god's chosen few, 'tis theirs to kill
With all the fury of a hell-born will;

No mercy give to those who such shall dare;
Not e'en their sleeping babes art thou to spare;
For one offense a priest a Jew may slay—
When to some other god he dares to pray;
For this were thousands murdered in a day.
'Tis this is meant, according to my view:
Thou shalt not kill my favorite race, the Jew;
Yet him may kill if he shall dare be free
To worship any other god but me.
"Thou shalt not steal"; and thieves thou much
shouldst spurn;
But borrow all you wish, and ne'er return,
As Egyptian jewels you did borrow,
Forgetting to return 'pon the morrow.
Again I say, thou shalt not tell a lie,
Leave that to Abe, Ike, Jake and Jeremy;
This privilege to prophets doth belong,

It gives such force and relish to their song.
Again, shalt not commit adultery;
But here your kings and prophets shall be free:
David's the man who doth just meet my mind,
In Solomon but little fault can find,
And Hosea truly is not far behind.
And "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife";
This to o'ercome, just take the fellow's life,
As David did, the "man of god's own heart,"
The wily chap who played the devil's part.
Nothing's more clear, or ever yet can be,
Than Moses' god taught human slavery;
Might traffic e'en in your own flesh and blood,
To sell your daughter for a slave was good.
I ask of Christians, all, to tell me how
That right it could be then, and not right now?

Remember, now, this is not Moses' law,
But of that god whom he on Sinai saw;
Consistent, not, to strike from out the roll
A part of laws divine, and not the whole?
Let us have slavery, then, the wide world 'round,
Or blot from out your code these laws profound;
Let Moses' book go tumbling to the ground:
But 'tis a fact that when these laws you spurn,
Consistent, then, you must the whole book burn;
Why keep his cosmogony and fall of man
While most his laws are not allowed to stand?
I'll tell you why: 'cause in your faith's a flaw;
Like drowning men, you're grasping at a straw.
But I've digressed; perhaps I have been rude,
Nor further, here, my own vain thoughts intrude.
"If an ox gore a woman, that she die,
The ox shall be stoned"; profound philosophy!

Profound, again: "the witches shall not live";
God's admission of witches here we have.
"The gods shall not revile," sounds strange
to me,
For god here grants that other gods there be.
No law the god of Moses makes more clear
Than that no land be tilled in the seventh year,
And yet I fear that e'en the pious Jew
In this, his god's command, is rarely true.
Before thy sovereign god three times a year
Must all thy males religiously appear;
Of course, to do the thing exactly right,
The rest the time must keep from out his sight.
The god of Moses surely was minute,
As those who read the record can't dispute,
In orders given for his tabernacle,
Altar, ark, court, candlesticks and table:

These holy things, in order to be good,
Must of naught else be made but *shittim wood;*
To deck the temple, nothing will compare
With blue, scarlet, fine linen and goats' hair;
To keep the sun and rain from off the head,
Use badger skins or ram skins all *dyed red;*
With gold and silver must be quite profuse;
Then precious stones are also of much use:
Grand as all this, 'tis tame, to say the least,
With Aaron's get-up, first great Hebrew priest;
But this must read, describe I'll not attempt;
Such gorgeousness no mortal ever dreamt;
With his fantastic robe and bells all 'round,
Would take conceit all out the modern clown.
How kind in Moses' god to be profuse
In all these little things of so much use!
Aaron and his sons he then tells us how

Must consecrate, which we will glance at now:
Take one young bullock, mind he is not old,
And two unblemished rams from out the fold,
Unleavened bread, and cakes tempered with oil,
Wafers of wheaten flour that may not spoil,
All these into one basket now must swash,
Then Aaron and his sons must nicely wash;
The fancy robes and bells must now put on,
Then bring the bull to lay their hands upon;
Now kill the bull and take his sacred blood
To cleanse the altar, make it pure and good;
Then take the caul—I'll tell you where it is:
Above the liver and the two kidneys;
These on the altar burn, but flesh and skin
And dung without, an offering for sin:
Unto the altar now a ram is led,
That they may lay their hands upon his head,

And when the long-horned sacred ram is slain,
Cut up and washed, together put again,
He looks so very pure and clean and neat,
Must on the altar burn, will smell so sweet.
Next comes a *ram*, with rev'rence I salute,
As honored high above all other brute;
Aaron and his sons 'pon his sacred head
Their hands have placed, and now his blood
is shed,
Which, let men with awe and grave visage hear,
Was rubbed upon the tip of the right ear
Of Aaron and his sons; and 'pon the thumb
Of the right hand the blood of the great dumb
Was also placed, as upon the great toe
Of the right foot the sacred blood did flow;
And the fantastic robes were sprinkled o'er
To consecrate these priests with sacred gore;

And then was ta'en the sacred rump and caul,
Fat of the inwards, kidneys, fat and all,
One loaf of bread, also one cake well oiled,
One wafer (cannot say, perhaps 'twas boiled);
All these did Aaron and his sons, the brave,
Before the god of Moses proudly *wave;*
And more, it is your duty to believe,
At him they did these sacred relics *heave.*
All this and more as noble and as grand
We find the god of Moses did command.
Again for Milton's pen, in words sublime
All this to tell, instead of halting rhyme.
It strikes me here as strange, to say the least,
That Christians thus don't consecrate their priests;
On Moses' god the Christians found their faith,
Why follow not his laws and what he saith?

Not take his cosmogony and fall of man,
Then spurn his rites, adopt some other plan.
Annulled these laws? I know not when or
where:
Incumbent once on man, then still they are.
The god who tells us how the world was made,
Of man's great fall, the fruit which he for-
bade,
The mighty flood whereby a world was drowned,
The mighty tower where language did confound,
The same he is who also tells you how
To make a priest, as I have told you now.
And Moses' god his laws gave by the score
You deem yourselves too wise to follow more,
Now, pray, sirs, be consistent, take the whole,
Give to the law of Moses full control,
Or down with all; take reason for your guide,

Whatever may befall, whate'er betide;
No half-way work about it; either they
Are *all* laws of a Power you should obey,
Or *none*. I hold the privilege not thine
A part to spurn of laws that are *divine*.
Go circumcise your males, as Hebrews do,
Do other things commanded by the Jew,
Or rather by his god, you hold are true;
Go sacrifice your oxen, kids and lambs,
Your heifers, bullocks, your he-goats and rams;
Sometimes a human victim you must slay
To calm the wrath of him you would obey;
Incense offer; anoint yourselves with oil;
Don't think you can the god of Moses foil:
This he commands, why should you not obey?
What right to worship in another way?

VI.

But I digress: to Sinai we'll return,
Still more of Moses and his god to learn.
True to his clan, the first high-priest we see
Making a golden calf his deity,
And then the base poltroon would throw the
blame
Upon the people who request the same;
Excuse, indeed, for consecrated priest,
That shows the arrant sneak, to say the least.
The wrath of Moses' god now waxeth hot,
He'd slay the mighty host upon the spot:
But Moses brings his arguments to bear,
Reminds him of the oath which he did swear;
E'en bids that *he his evil thoughts repent;*
Again god yields, again his will is bent;
So Moses says, but in th' ensuing breath

He says for this offense were put to death,
By order of his god, three thousand men,
By neighbors, brothers and companions slain;
But Aaron, noble priest who made the calf,
Had not a word to say in their behalf;
No doubt he stood aside and had his laugh.
Oh, righteous, merciful and loving god,
Hadst thou with Moses long the fair earth trod,
Thy creature, man, a thing had surely been
But of the past; no more his face were seen.
Now what is left of Israel he bids go
Unto the land where milk and honey flow,
But he himself, he says, will stay behind,
Lest to consume the rest might have a mind:
To let him stay I think I'd been inclined.
But Moses pleads, again his god consents;
We ever find it thus; his god repents.

But from *this* law he will not be beguiled:
The father's wrongs must rest upon the child
For generations, say some three or four,
As it may please his grace how many more.
Leviticus I pass, as 'tis for priests,
And would not rob them their delicious feast;
Peruse it carefully let each divine,
They'll find so much within that is sublime.
This much, I'm sure, will thrill them with delight:
In all offerings made, the priests, by right,
Took a large share; a holy precedent
To which no modern priests refuse assent.
But crook-backed, dwarfish priests here read their doom;
Nor he that's lame or mangy need presume
To be a priest, nor that hath a flat nose,

Or hath big corns or bunions on his toes:
All these the god of Moses did refuse;
A long-nosed, wily priest just met his views.
If modern judges would much knowledge learn,
T' the book of Numbers I advise they turn:
There they may learn to prove adultery
Without aid of brief or testimony;
By use of a little *bitter water*
Can test the guilt of a suspected daughter.
In judges' hands the water might not work,
Then why should priests the sacred duty shirk?
Why lawyers, priests and judges are so slow
T' adopt this law of Moses, I don't know.
Another law the god of Moses gave
That shows him kind, and merciful, and brave:
"Him that gathers sticks 'pon the Sabbath day
Must stone until he dies." That is the way

To treat the wretch his law shall disobey.
'Twould seem that miracles enough were
wrought
When Israel was out of Egypt brought;
The walled-up waters they had passed dry-shod;
To show the power of Moses and his god.
Not so; nor yet had Sinai's awful scene,
Nor all the wonders wrought, sufficient been,
E'en the three thousand slain, as we are told,
Who worshiped Aaron's calf 'twas made of
gold;
Another sacrifice must yet be made,
And Israel in the dust again be laid:
Two hundred and fifty princes now 'rise,
Who do the mighty Moses much surprise;
They dare assert that they, as well as he
And priest Aaron, good men and true may be;

With horror, Moses falls upon his face,
And asks his god to teach the haughty race
To be more humble, and to not presume
To set up as priests—you see, there wasn't room:
Foaming with wrath, his god constructs a pit,
And drops the famous princes into it;
And fourteen thousand more, who dared protest,
He quickly sends to their eternal rest.
No half-way work by Moses' god was done—
Would be the prince of murderers, or none.
Once more the magic rod of Aaron comes,
And, like the tree in spring-time, buds and blooms:
Oh, magic rod! so potent in thy sway,
Lice to create, or turn a foe away;

To rule a world with thee it were but play.
Another law the god of Moses gave,
Which may, no doubt, a host of sinners save;
'Tis this: take a red heifer (must be *red*),
Before some mighty priest must kill her dead,
Then burn the flesh, the blood, the dung, the
skin—
The ashes now *will purify all sin.*
'Gainst those who dare oppose his chosen few
We find the god of Moses ever true,
Which proves he was alone god of the Jew;
The Canaanites, whom Israel annoyed,
By his consent were utterly destroyed;
The tribes of Og and Sihon did contrive
To murder all; no soul was left alive;
He crowds himself into a narrow pass,
And hears the chat 'twixt Balaam and his ass,

All in the interest of his favored clan,
About as we expect of wicked man.
With the Midianites, we see again
But little choice 'twixt Moses' god and man—
The *maids*, by his command, alone were saved;
No doubt because were nice and well behaved
He claims from these his share, say thirty-two,
Much as ungodly men are known to do.
In Deuteronomy, again, you'll find
Commands that show his god so very kind:
Thine enemy pursue, thy sword not sheathe,
Whilst there is left a living soul to breathe;
Hast thou a stubborn or rebellious son,
Go set him up for every wretch to stone;
But hold! enough of Moses and his book,
At minor prophets let us take a look:
We've followed Moses far, his god to show,

Found all that we could wish or care to know;
Have found just what we might expect to find,
A crude conception of barbarian mind;
Vindictive, cruel, passionate, severe,
A corporeal being, too, 'tis clear;
Of all the human passions had his share:
In short, was much the same the authors were
That wrote the book; their ideal rose no higher,
Whatever grace or aid that did inspire.
The minor prophets we shall briefly view;
The book of Moses gives the vital cue
To all the rest; and we shall find it true
That Moses' god's the ideal of the Jew.

VII.

Joshua, son of Nun, I much admire;
To ape the holy Moses did aspire;
Worthy successor the cut-throat prophet,

Sending all the heathen scamps to tophet:
As prophet, though, perhaps we oughtn't name
him,
But then something more than man must claim
him;
A sort of god a barbarous age turns out
A cultured age can nothing know about;
Whate'er he was, we may not let one pass
Who, in his skill, e'en rivals Balaam's ass:
Nature we find subservient to his will,
For, as he bids, the sun and moon stand still
More light to give, that Israel might slay
The heathen scamps that would th' intruder
stay.
'Tis the same god we see Moses depicts,
Who to the holy Jew his aid restricts;
All human mortals else o'er the wide earth

His aid, his thought, his care, his love, not worth.

For a good story, it must be confessed,
The prophet Samuel's not behind the rest.
He says: The ark by the Philistines ta'en
Proved such a curse it was returned again.
Five golden emerods and five gold mice
To Israel's god were sent as sacrifice;
And when the wondrous ark had been returned,
The kine that drew, the cart that bore, were burned;
Bethshemesh's men, who, curious to see,
(Where were the women? that's what puzzles me),
Were smote, some *fifty thousand and three score*,
(But, to be accurate, must add ten more),

By Israel's god; and all of this, 'tis said,
For *looking at the ark that Moses made.*
It is not strange that what were left did quail,
And from this holy god should take leg-bail.
Wrath worthy of a god again is shown
By the command to Samuel made known;
The new king, Saul, is ordered forth to fight,
And utterly destroy th' Amalekite.
E'en for a god he doth not draw it mild:
Spare not a man, woman, or sucking child,
He says; nor ox, nor sheep, camel, or ass:
No, not a living thing shall he let pass.
Saul disobeys; not equal, yet, the test
To crush out all that's human in the breast.
His god is wroth: to Samuel complains;
He'll be obeyed; 'tis he who holds the reins;
He'll have a king, to spare will take less pains.

But Samuel, more true the god he serves,
Less plagued with conscience, and, perhaps,
with nerves,
Hath Agag brought and laid close at his feet,
And chops him into very fine *minced-meat;*
And Israel's god, for once, nor halts nor yields
E'en to the power the mighty prophet wields;
Insists that Saul, who was not quite a brute,
Should doff his kingship, as he did not suit;
Sends Samuel, sneakingly, to anoint
One "*after his own heart*" he did appoint;
The prophet, with a lie upon his lips,
Takes a red heifer, and away he slips:
Thus David's anointed king of the Jews,
As vile a wretch as ever trod in shoes;
Witness farmer Nabal, who lost his life
That David might make Abigail his wife;

His treachery to Achish, generous friend,
No man of honor that may dare defend;
The man he slew who brought to him the news
That Saul was dead, and he king of the Jews;
Uriah's death: the wretch could plan such crime
Should wear the brand of infamy through time;
I care not what his station was, his name
Should live an eternal monument of shame.
His warfare, too, if the one-half be true
The record gives, should brand his name anew:
To saw, to chop, harrow and mutilate,
To burn in kilns, as doth the record state,
Might do for David, Moses, or Joshua,
These holy men, inspired by God, you say,
But hardly think that this would do to-day.
Wretch, in all evil who played well his part,
Was this King David, "after god's own heart";

A god 'tis thus compared, it must be plain,
Was but the vague ideal of muddled brain.
Nathan, the prophet, claims a passing glance;
'Twas he that did Bathsheba's cause advance;
Well skilled he was in sly diplomacy,
And served the god of Israel well, we see:
He ousts the lawful heir from off the throne,
"A goodly man," 'tis said, and worthy son;
The kingdom gains for one he doth admire,
A lustful cut-throat like his noted sire.
Now comes one sometimes called the man
of straw—
I mean the famous Tishbite, Elijah;
Prophets of Baal to match he did aspire,
In calling down from heaven the sacred fire:
He beat; four hundred prophets then were
doomed

To bite the dust for what they had presumed;
Prophets were plenty then as tramps are now,
And to get rid a few, no matter how:
On Çarmel's top he went and cried out loud,
"It's going to rain; behold, I see a cloud!"
And Ahab scampered home fast as he could,
Thinking, no doubt, there'd be another flood.
And now Elijah hears "a still, small voice,"
"Anoint two kings, one prophet of my choice,"
It said: "The kings to slay just all they can,
The prophet slay the rest, not leave a man."
He now proceeds to fulfill the command;
Anoints *Elisha*, plowing twelve in hand;
With twenty-four oxen doth Elisha plow—
A team like this should have my prettiest bow.
I hardly think Elisha quite fulfilled
What was expected, howe'er much he willed;

We read of no great havoc that he made,
Though forty-two brave urchins low he laid
By help of two she-bears; it seemeth now
He had much better have stuck to the plow.

VIII.

To the poetic prophet now we come,
Isaiah, of Amos the illustrious son;
That may not do him justice, own I fear,
He is so deep, and sometimes rather queer;
Into ideal realms doth oft aspire,
So much above the common versifier;
He is so very deep the common mind
Not much but incoherent nonsense find:
The prophet, though, that doth theologians
please,
Can get whate'er they wish from him with ease.
Is it not strange a god should speak to man

In riddles that he cannot understand?
I own was much amazed when first I saw
How cool he topples over Moses' law:
Offerings, he said, aren't pleasing in god's sight,
In blood of beasts he taketh no delight;
Commands shall bring no more oblations vain,
From use of incense, too, they should abstain.
Who shall decide when prophets disagree?
Two prophets plainly contradict, we see,
And each cites god for his authority.
It is quite plain Isaiah knew not the law,
Or else his god had held it more in awe;
The book of Moses, we are told, was lost,
And but for a copy in a cranny tost,
And ultimately found, we then had been
Without the wisdom that's contained therein;
Ye gods! just think what then had been our fate,

Had we not known how god did all create,
And all the rest that Moses doth relate.
Some Infidels, we know, with heads unsound,
Have dared assert Hilkiah forged, not found;
The book, 'tis said, was much obliterated;
Esdras did restore, 'tis also stated,
But here, again (perhaps the fellows lie),
They say he did restore and *amplify*.
But what's the odds, if Esdras was inspired,
If he did add what seemed to him required?
'Tis just the same; if Moses did not say,
Or do, he surely ought about that way;
If in the book of Moses, then, we find
That which, 'tis quite conclusive to the mind,
Was written some six centuries, or so,
Since Moses' death had filled the land with woe,
It were not strange; chronology, we know,

Against inspiration hath little show.
What does seem strange to me, I must confess,
Is that, for centuries, say, more or less,
These laws, midst fire and smoke, from Sinai given,
Brought down, as claimed, by God himself, from heaven,
To be the guide of man, his finger-post,
Pointing the way of truth, *should then be lost.*
But lost they were, and e'en the chosen few
Were ages left in ignorance t' pursue
Their sinful course; to idols did bow down,
Just like the heathen host did them surround;
Josiah read the law, and rent his clothes—
It was all new to him, we may suppose;
He slew the priests, he filled the land with groans;

E'en robbed the sepulchers, and burned the bones:

To make it short, he turned things upside down
To reach the law that in the book was found.
I deem it true, and think have plainly shown,
Isaiah the laws of Moses had not known;
Yet I must own that it would seem to me
For prophets to differ, an absurdity:
If Moses affirms, and Isaiah denies,
As is found in the law of sacrifice,
And both affirm it is their god doth speak,
I will not say both lie—I am too meek;
But Isaiah in prophecies did blunder,
Howe'er much this may excite our wonder:
He prophesies for Ahaz, and he fails,
As regards the kings he calls the two tails;
Says over Ahaz they shall *not* prevail;

The sequel shows that Ahaz, though, was
crushed:
'Tis strange the prophet's voice not then was
hushed.
A passage here is found that shows how keen
Theologians are; also shows how mean:
A virgin shall conceive and bear a son—
Before he judgment hath shall this be done:
What done? The kings that Ahaz fret with wars
Shall have forsook the land that he abhors.
Mostly obscure, for once Isaiah's clear:
The *time* we find distinctly stated here
In which the child he speaks of should appear;
And to *that age* 'tis limited, we find:
It surely was a brilliant stretch of mind
In some shrewd priest, who spans the long
time o'er

And brings it down seven hundred years or more.

Of Isaiah, junior, little have to say:
From chapter forty, on, wrote he, or they;
Cyrus is spoken of rather too bold;
Much faith's required to think he was foretold;
Prophets in general must prove more correct,
Or too clear foresight leads us to suspect:
Of this Isaiah want more authority
To clear the work from what seems forgery.
Now of the crafty prophet we will speak
Who managed all his prophecies so sleek,
And if his prophecies were not fulfilled,
His god repented, did not as he willed.
If God would change his course at our desire
We might foretell, as well as Jeremiah.
Jeremiah's god was much like all the rest,

Admitted other gods, but *he was best;*
And yet the people sometimes would deceive,
If we the crafty prophet may believe;
He takes a novel course the Jews to smite,
Sends serpents and cockatrices to bite,
And when once done, then, in a fit of blues,
Repents the evil he hath done the Jews.
Again he gets provoked, and threatens loud
No more such wickedness will be allowed;
He'll send the sword to slay and dogs to tear,
The fowls of heaven shall fasten in their hair,
The beasts of earth shall spring from out their lair
Upon the wicked Jews; he will enjoy
To see the sword and beasts and fowls destroy;
Is weary of repenting, now doth say
Though Moses stood before, would have his way,

And says will even hunt and fish for Jews
(Perhaps, like oysters, they would make good
stews);
But, if the prophet's god with fury slays,
The prophet, himself, loudly for this prays.
Jeremiah's god we find a little tough
On prophets; says they *lie*, and that is rough.
Curious 'tis to see how gods will bend
To minor things: Jeremiah's god did send
Him to hide an old girdle in a hole,
That he might see how it would rot and mould,
Just to illustrate how he'd mar the pride
Of Judah, and Jerusalem, beside.
'Tis very sad to see that Jeremiah
Should with the ruling king basely conspire
To tell a lie to save himself and king;
This, for a prophet, was not quite the thing.

Some blunders, too, did Jeremiah make
In prophecies our faith does somewhat shake.
The pleasant things he for the king predicts
With what took place seriously conflicts:
"Shall die in peace"; yet in a prison dies;
His sons are slain before the father's eyes;
His eyes are then put out: peaceful, indeed!
But for a death thus peaceful few would plead.
But, as for Jeremiah, all went well:
He, for Nebuchadnezzar, did foretell
All about the Egyptians, and, no doubt,
In course of time, was by this king found out.

IX.

The dreamy prophet now our verse doth claim:
At Chebar saw what brought prophetic fame;
His thoughts and dreams were brilliant and
sublime,

But would not care with him to sleep or *dine.*
His god the prophet gave the queerest food,
The people statutes gave he owns *not good*,
And bravely owns that, when it doth him please,
No scruple hath a prophet to deceive.
We find him, too, with fury running o'er;
'Tis the same god of whom we've heard before.
Ezekiel wrote since Moses' book was found,
Therefore in offerings we find him sound;
The sacrifice of beasts he did direct;
Isaiah's god was wrong in this respect;
Ezekiel, though, we find, made a mistake
When of the land of Egypt bold he spake:
He says would put a hook into her jaws,
And teach her how to keep the Jewish laws;
And then, for forty days, no foot of man
Or beast shall pass through this deserted land.

This prophecy, I think, ne'er came to pass;
Ezekiel spake too loud, like Balaam's ass.
This prophet, too, I cannot comprehend;
In solving riddles doth too much depend:
"A city born before her navel's cut"—
This may be metaphor, and may be smut;
Whate'er it be, this prophet's work we find
Full of such stuff, which seems just met his mind.

The next prophet great is Daniel the brave,
For centuries lay quiet in his grave,
And then came forth, so much he had to tell
Of what had taken place; and tells it well:
But, when he speaks of man, we can't deny
That Daniel the prophet was the great *I*.
Little I care for what he said or saw,
Cannot concern myself with *men of straw*.

But Hosea's god, we find, bears off the palm:
Commands the prophet, so direct and calm,
To take a strumpet, make of her a wife,
And thus this prophet lives a holy life.
Now for a prophet that could tell a tale,
E'en though his prophecies, we find, did fail:
I mean the prophet swallowed by the whale;
And yet I think the story more complete
Had Jonah downed the whale—a better feat.
It seems this prophet tried his god to flee,
Rather than prophesy 'gainst Nineveh,
So took a ride upon a boisterous sea;
Gets caught, and, sent again his work to do,
Was made to prophesy what proved not true;
Gets angry, then, and would prefer to die
Rather than made to tell another lie.
Well, Jonah, I'm not sure but you were right;

To die were better than such gods to fight.
Of old Bible prophets we've had enough;
The rest re-echo the same sort of stuff:
Their gods, I've said, and now repeat, we find
The vague conception of uncultured mind;
Reflected image of their own weak brain
Is what they give us o'er and o'er again.

X.

As one would speak of some loved sire that's gone
Within the home that loved him, was his own,
So let me speak of Jesus, kindly, here,
Amid the friends that doth his name revere.
In truth, I could not speak another way,
Were I in India, or in far Cathay;
For 'tis a name in reverence I hold,
Like that of Socrates, and such, of old;

But while would kindly speak, must truthful be,
Nor love nor fear should from this duty free.
What came to Greeks some centuries before,
Now came to Jews, and by them needed more—
A man, I mean, advanced beyond his age,
Who saw and spake and counseled like a sage
At times; say, when his heart and mind
were free,
And he broke loose from all theology:
At times like these no man more wisdom spake;
Error seemed doomed; the light began to break.
A God of love a Jew had now conceived;
But for the Hebrew Scriptures had believed;
The voice of Jesus then had striven to prove
A Creator worthy his creatures' love.
But, dark and dismal, stood before his eyes
A *book*, 'twas called *inspired*, but full of lies,

And which, at times, 'twould seem, *he* did
despise;
But yet, it warped his judgment, clogged his
mind,
His own ideal the wretched book did blind,
Until, chameleon like, his God did change
To any hue the Scriptures might arrange;
Now loves all creatures that he did create,
Now damns with endless fire, so fierce his hate;
Now tender as the mother toward her child,
Now savage as the tiger running wild;
Now asks impossibilities of man,
If not performed, to misery will damn:
Believe, he says, or surely you'll be damned,
As if belief into the mind were crammed;
Belief's not subject to the wish or will;
Convince my reason, or I doubt you still.

The signs that Jesus gives follow belief,
Do plainly show all must be damned, in brief;
No human being's lived, or yet will live,
Could stand the test that Jesus here doth give:
Should any question as to what I mean,
Would ask they turn to Mark, chapter sixteen.
What say we then? Did Jesus thus proclaim,
Or is this forgery upon his name?
As prophet, though, I speak of Jesus here,
And in this roll will see how doth appear.
The so-called prophets that had gone before
Had spoke of one to come who should restore
The house of Judah to its former fame,
That, under David, did before attain.
Some one had said in Bethlehem should be born
The promised one should lead the race forlorn;

Offspring of David, too, he was to be,
Should rise to set the struggling nation free.
From David could no lineage trace, 'tis true;
That Nazareth his birth-place was, he knew;
Was conscious of the fact no royal blood
Of David coursed his veins, and this annoyed;
Shown in his questions to the Pharisees;
Himself somewhat perplexed, as shown by these.
The queer descent's given by th' Evangelists,
Which show how, for a cause, a saint can twist,
Had not as yet appeared, to give him pain,
But rose when he had passed away, 'tis plain;
The same of lies of quite as little worth,
Claiming Bethlehem as his place of birth,
Yet, by his followers, he was proclaimed
The promised one the so-called prophets named.
At last, it seems that this he did believe,

Such power hath flattery, so will deceive;
With this conviction fixed, the fact is plain,
Jesus no longer was entirely sane;
The Hebrew books no doubt by him were read
Contained enough to turn the strongest head,
If believed; and that they were it is plain,
Such influence o'er him they did obtain.
He now the Messiah was; could foretell,
And was to judge mankind 'twixt heaven and hell.
Hear of the signs when he shall reappear
To judge the world, and take possession here:
The sun and moon shall both refuse their light,
The stars shall fall from heaven — an awful sight;
The heavens will shake, and then, 'mid thunderings loud,

He comes, in majesty, from out the clouds;
Angels attend, and, with a trumpet blast,
The dead are summoned through the ages past.
He then proceeds the righteous to select,
The chosen few, the good God did elect—
These shall forevermore in glory dwell;
The *mighty host* shall writhe in endless hell:
The God of love, who did all things create,
Turns, as we see, into a God of hate.
Charge not to noble Jesus this ideal,
The Hebrew books made him believe as real,
Adverse his nobler impulses of heart,
From which these books had caused him to depart;
A dogma originally not their own,
But stole from Zerdusht, as already shown.
We have the prophecy; now for the day:

"Before this generation shall pass 'way,"
He says, what's here foretold shall come to pass.
Ah, noble one! sadly deceived; alas!
When eighteen hundred years have o'er us rolled,
We find still unfulfilled what thou foretold.
Thus erred as prophet he that's claimed as God;
Onward still, hugging falsehood, Christians plod.
In fairness, though, this much I grant must own,
What Jesus said or did cannot be known;
The record, on its face, distinctly shows
Hath doctored been by friends, perhaps by foes,
Till truth is buried in its grave so deep
That in its grave it must forever sleep.
To cut and carve, deceive, add and subtract,

A thousand priests, 'twould seem, had tried
their tact,
Till such a jumbled mess doth now appear
The brains of man cannot the record clear,
Yet must accept, as cometh to our hands,
Can only take the record as it stands.

XI.

And now Mohammed comes upon the scene,
And none like him before had ever been;
The great Creator raised him up to show
All that this world should ever need to know:
A book to write: the *only* book inspired
By God, and all the human race required,
The Koran was to be. Perhaps he lied,
But said that our Scriptures were falsified
And mutilated—which, I must confess,
Can't see that he who reads can say much less;

But somehow, though, we find Mohammed took
Most of his dogmas from the Hebrew book;
The angel Gabriel, ever by his side,
To truth, no doubt, the prophet he did guide:
So truth alone into the Koran crept,
And all impure and false without was kept.
Writings on which Almighty Power hath set
His seal, 'twould seem, had been preserved;
and yet
We are told these writings inspired were tost
Into a box, and many thus were lost.
Thanks to the Koran, though, in it's revealed
What, but for *it*, in vain we had appealed
To books inspired; and yet, all wish to know
How comes the body from the grave so low:
Imperishable and pure is the *rump-bone*
('Tis the great Koran tells us this, alone);

This is exposed to forty days of rain,
And thus our bodies spring to life again.
Was ever anything than this more grand!
Sure, Gabriel must had all his bells in hand
When this he rang into the prophet's ears,
Which, on this subject, should allay all fears.
The god Mohammed paints is not the best—
Vindictive, cold, and brutal as the rest,
The *many* damns, and saves the chosen few,
But these Mohammedans, not Christian, Jew;
A bridge o'er hell constructs we cannot miss;
No hair so fine, no sword so sharp, as this:
This all must walk, or plunge to hell below,
And to eternal bow-wows they must go.
The women, most, Mohammed says, are lost,
Consigned to his dire hell of heat and frost;
The pretty ones, alone, shall obtain bliss—

Such as the prophet might delight to kiss.
Mohammed, unlike Jesus, took the sword
To force upon mankind the sacred word;
His followers, unlike Christians, pursue
The path their leader trod, boldly and true;
Result: two hostile hosts, frenzied with rage,
Have drenched the world in blood, from age
to age;
And all for what? All in religion's name:
My God! mankind in mass should blush for
shame.
When centuries have marked the rolling years,
Another prophet on the earth appears;
Not all the world may yet this prophet know:
His name was Smith—familiarly called Joe.
To sneer, perhaps, to-day, are some inclined,
But, in a thousand years, who lives will find

A wondrous chap was Smith: a god on earth,
In human form, but of miraculous birth;
His book will then another Koran be,
From the Most High claiming authority;
And prodigies to him will be allowed
Would made a Moses or Mohammed proud.
So wags the world; and, sometime, will be sung
The glories of Joe Smith and Brigham Young.
I now set up as prophet, and predict
This will take place, *if nothing doth conflict;*
If should, will not say that God repented,
But *culture and the printing-press prevented.*
With what have said, the prophets bid adieu;
What follows, brief, stray thoughts point out to view.

POSTSCRIPT.

Come, fellow-traveler in the walk of life:
I call thee not for wrangling or for strife,
And only ask thou shalt not set aside
That reason which God gave thee as thy guide:
Then tell me, if thou canst, that such as these,
Call you them prophets, or whate'er you please,
That high ideal impress upon thy mind
To which thine own conception is inclined
Of that high Power which all things did create—
Supreme above all human estimate.
Or, rather, is thine own ideal *debased*
From such crude views as in their works are traced,
Convinced, the while, by God they were inspired,

As it has long been taught thou wert required?
If this be so, as oft it is, I claim,
Then cast the superstition from thy brain;
Let reason rule; 'twas this the Most High gave
To serve thee in thy need; use it, be brave;
No views of mortal man the earth e'er trod
Allow to sink the ideal of thy God.
This more: I claim that man is true and just
As high his ideal God in whom doth trust;
The ideal low, the man is false and mean;
'Tis so to-day, and hath forever been;
The ideal high, a Jesus walks the earth,
Whatever age or land may give him birth.
But "education warps the common mind—
Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined";
Let man be taught the Power that did create
Vindictive, cruel, merciless as great;

Will burn his creatures in eternal fire:
Than is his God will man mount up much
higher?
There are exceptions to the common rule:
Some men there are, taught in the self-same
school
To sink their reason and their manhood scorn;
Mark out a course called wretched and forlorn;
Called infidels—scorned by the multitude,
Their names disgraced—that, like a wall, have
stood
Battling for what they deemed was just and
true;
Such oft the fate of the most noble few.
Mankind, like sheep, in crowds prefer to go,
And never ask if this and that is so;
Their sires believed, it therefore must be true;

For ages thus the beaten track pursue.
Now, let me ask, in candor, of mankind,
In that Old Bible what there is you find
Worthy rev'rence? how much to be admired?
And yet you call a book like this inspired.
Inspired of what? I ask. Pray take a look:
Enough, say I, to damn another book
To that oblivion it doth belong;
To tolerate the book, I say, is wrong.
I do not say there's nothing in it good—
No book that's writ this truthfully we could;
And yet do say so much in it is base
That in no library deserves a place.
The God it paints is of the rudest kind—
Reflected image of a vulgar mind;
A God unworthy of his creatures' love;
A *book* of barbarous thought, no whit above.

A book not dangerous in this, our age,
As worthlessness is shown on every page,
Except that superstition's to it lent
An influence good sense may not prevent:
This being so, I hold it should be spurned—
Mankind were better if the book were burned.
The New Testament varies from the Old,
With much alloy is also much fine gold;
What Jesus taught, unbiased by the past,
Deserves to stand while time and mem'ry last;
Sweet thoughts came *svarkling* forth from off
the *Mount*,
Like limpid waters from the crystal fount;
The ethics taught were all could be desired—
Left to himself, had almost seemed inspired;
But errs, and human frailty shows, at last,
Trusting too much in prophets of the past.

But true it is, the Testament, well read,
We're not so sure what Jesus did or said;
When falsehood we detect in any book,
For truth can hardly tell just where to look.
Let us be thankful, though, we still can trace
A spirit here the priests could not efface:
With all the dogmas common sense must spurn,
A spirit rests beneath we may discern,
Breathing nobleness, purity and love,
The "doctoring" of priests could not remove.
The Sermon on the Mount we may believe
From Jesus came, as here we may perceive
Something above the spirit of his time;
The moralist advanced to heights sublime.
Other discourse we find the book within
We cannot help but feel that came from him,
Or one, at least, advanced beyond his race,

In which the high-born moralist we trace.
Perhaps, if all the falsehood were laid bare,
False prophecies of Jesus were not there;
A God 'twould burn his creatures in hell-fire
Might also from the Testament retire;
And yet, perhaps, he may have this believed,
As man he was; as man, might be deceived:
And superstition in a people bred,
From age to age, may turn the wisest head.
It is not strange that man should strive to
clear
Away the mysteries surround him here;
Some few there are with strong desire to know
Why this and that and other things are so:
And this is well; endeavor thus is moved
By which great truths are sought, and found,
and proved.

Of such great works as strike mankind with awe,
Moving in harmony by Nature's law,
Much now is known of what was once con-
cealed—
To so-called prophets then was this revealed?
Copernicus, rise up and answer *No;*
And you, Pythagoras and Galileo,
Kepler, Descartes, Newton and Strabo,
Herschel, Laplace, Leibnitz, Hook and Ray,
And many more who trod the toilsome way;
Watts, Morse and Franklin, who have tamed
His steeds,
And made subservient t' the people's needs;
Huxley, Spencer, Darwin, Tyndall, all—
Come forth and answer to the challenged call!
'Tis such as these through toil his *works* have
shown,

Which is all that is, or ever can be, known
Of that Great Power that rules the world alone.
And this is all that ever was designed;
Were it not so, he had not left us blind.
And when you tell me he a book inspired,
That is not all could be by man desired;
A book, indeed, that doth himself defame,
That casts dishonor on th' Creator's name;
A crooked book with contradictions filled,
That discord hath into the soul instilled;
A book of myths to solve doth man defy—
To call them revelations is to lie;
A book pure thought contains, but evil more,
That falsehoods truths outnumber by the score;
A book indecent, nasty and obscene:
I say, whoe'er you are, that you *blaspheme.*
In Creation the Creator behold!

This should our study be: 'tis here are told
Of Him, His wisdom, majesty and power;
High o'er all else, here knowledge gained doth
tower.
We here shall learn to reverence and love
That Power which did create and guides and
moves;
But more: to know his works it is to find
What elevates and benefits mankind;
Brings to him comforts in his present state;
Who will not say for this to strive is great?
And what, I ask, is piety but this?
Doth true religion in aught else consist?
I have no rev'rence for your crooked *book;*
To the Creator and his works I look.
Come, Christian, now, let us each other learn:
I'm not a wretch, and yet your *book* I spurn—

At least as truth inspired by the Most High,
And being the best guide for man, deny.
One difference is, I a Power conceive
In whose existence firmly I believe;
So much above the ideal of your *book*
That *its* debased Creator cannot brook.
Again we differ in our estimate
Of good works; I think you underrate;
These are of minor import in your view—
Repent, believe, or else be damned, say you;
I rather think 'twould do to risk it, though,
Just on good works, and take our chances so.
Give me the man who feeds and clothes the poor,
Who seeks the wretched, goes within their door;
I need not ask if he reveres his God,
I know 'tis so, knowing the path hath trod;

Just such an one I now have in my mind:
Is rather rough; big-hearted, though, and kind;
His word so good you need not stop to write,
Strengthened no whit if put in black and white;
Will ne'er leave his creditors in the lurch;
And yet, I think, he seldom goes to church;
Customs to please he will not rack his wits,
Can't hate the devil worse than hypocrites;
His prayers are silent as his works are good,
And yet would make earth *heaven* if he could.
Compared with him just place your Christian saint,
Veneered all over with fictitious paint;
Professions great to cover up his vice,
For any dirty thing, though, has his price;
Whenever can be heard he makes long prayers,
In matters of the Church no money spares,

In which his creditor quite likely shares;
Wherever 'twill be known, that is to say,
Gives to the poor in India and Cathay,
And lets the needy starve across the way.
But why describe what everybody knows?
The man's a hypocrite dressed in saint's clothes.
That this so often is, I'll tell you why:
Your whole vast structure's founded on a lie;
Moses's the corner-stone on which is built
A fabric braced with falsehood, steeped in guilt;
The worthy Jesus ta'en to make complete,
And priests have fixed it all up nice and neat;
Yet falsehood never could so safely hide
Truth could not find her, and at last o'erride.
Tear down proud temples, raze them to the ground;

To spend your means far better ways are found:
With it build dwellings for the worthy poor,
The maimed, the lame, the blind, the wide
world o'er;
Add to man's comforts if would make him good,
For wretched and half starved no preaching
would;
The wretched hovels of our poor go see;
A shame they are alike to you and me,
A blot on our boasted humanity;
Go drag them forth from out their filth and
slime,
Their misery 'tis which leads to vice and crime:
Mankind cast down, sunk deep in black despair,
Cannot be reached by preaching or by prayer.
A thousand ways there are your means to spend
Better than building temples without end;

You seem convulsed with horror at the thought:
Keep cool, I know you, have your virtues sought,
Your vices, too; your bickerings and strife
Are known to all—the least observant life.
What are your churches, now, but social clubs,
Whom the pretentious court, the lowly snub?
Were Jesus of Nazareth to enter there
A look of scorn would greet him everywhere.
These things have once sunk deep into my mind,
But now no longer, as no longer blind;
'Tis but the true result of a false creed,
For envy, hatred, vice and strife to breed;
Tear down your temples, now, I say, for all
On falsehood founded, but deserve to fall;
Down with religion, too, I hear you say;
My doctrine, carried out, but leads the way:

No, sir, I deny it· I have not taught
A principle from which should spring the thought;
I only ask religion we may found
On *truth*, planting her on unshaken ground.
For the Creator, to Creation look,
And not to man, nor yet to any *book;*
Science will guide, His wonders to unfold—
'Tis here, and here alone, we God behold.
O, man! than his *great works* what need we more,
The Author of which to fervently adore?
In God believe, and be thou not afraid
To show this love by loving all He's made;
Thy fellow-man in no condition spurn;
Of this great truth mankind should early learn;
Adore thy God, thy fellow-man assist—

What is religion if it be not this?
In immortality I must believe;
If otherwise, why born cannot conceive;
Endowed with such affection for our kind,
'Twould seem a cord that must forever bind:
With such fact known, that at the grave must part,
Who could endure? 'twould break the stoutest heart;
Pray tell me, then, shall man accuse, in thought,
That Power that hath this great Creation wrought,
Of such an act, by man performed, had hurled
On him the execrations of a world?
Ah, no; such thoughts as these let not abide
Within thy heart, of Him doth rule and guide;

Of all the works of the Creator's hands,
Far as we know, mankind the highest stands;
If they immortal durance are forbade,
How purposeless 'twould seem were all things made.

We cannot doubt the Power that did create
Equal our continuance in a future state;
Then why should doubt that He who being gave
Hath other plans for us beyond the grave?
For some wise purpose, why doth not appear,
Evil has been suffered existence here;
But let this hope ne'er sink within thy breast:
"God hath created all things for the best";
Reason affirms, in faith lift up thy voice,
Rejoice, O man, trusting in Him, rejoice!

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